

GREATNESS OF SARANAGATI IN SRI VAISHNAVISM

Vedas

Upanishads

Alankara Prasangha

Prasanga

Sri Bhagavatam

Mahabharata

Itihasa Purana

Divya Prabodha

Prasanga Prasangha

Stotra Ratna & Prasangha

Yoga Prasangha

Sri Bhagavatam

Gadya Prasangha

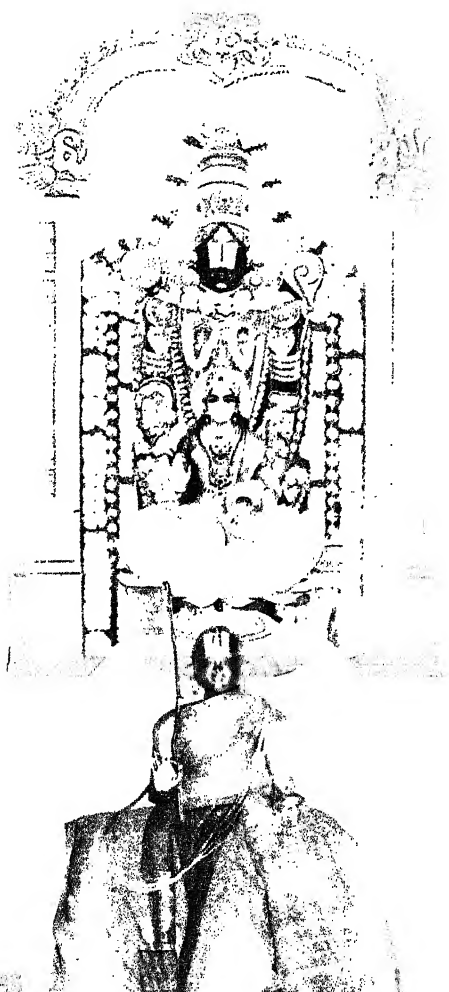
Prasangha

Astadashashtakam

Acharya Prasangha

Prasangha Prasangha

Varavara Mantra & Prasangha



Dr. C. Umakantham, M.A., Ph.D.

Srimathe Ramanujaya Namaha

GREATNESS OF SARANAGATI IN SRI VAISHNAVISM

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at the feet of Lord Venkateswara.

నజాతిభేదం నకులం నలిజ్గం నగుణక్రియాః ।
నదేశ కాలౌ నావస్థాం యోగోహ్యయమపేక్షతే ॥
బ్రహ్మక్షత్రి విశస్మాద్రాః స్త్రీయాశ్చాన్త రజాతయః ।
సర్వఏవ ప్రపద్యేరన్ సర్వధాతారము ఛ్యుతమ్ ॥

(Bharadwaja Samhita)

Akalakillen iraiyum enru Alarmel Mankai Urai Marpa
nikaril pukalay | ulakam munru utaiyay | ennai alvane
nikaril amarar, munikkanankal virumpum Tiruvenkatattane
pukal onruilla atiyen un atikkil amarntu pukuntene.

(Tiruvoymozhi, 6.10.10)

“Saranagati which is an absolute and unconditional self-surrender invokes God’s grace. It is exalted as one of the easiest and most efficacious Sadhana to Moksha. When Saranagati is adopted as the Sadhana for attaining Moksha, the complete responsibility of aspirant’s spiritual progress vests with God. The aspirant takes refuge in God, with full awareness of the bond existing between him and the God. God who is a father of all creations does not expect anything except unconditional love from the aspirant. Saranagati only reiterates the filial bond which exists between aspirant and the God, whose grace is there for all, like a mother’s selfless love for her child. What is required from aspirant is a constant remembrance and Supreme faith in God’s grace”.

Dr. M. VARADARAJAN

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12-09-2001

FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to write a Foreword to the book ‘Greatness of Saranagati in Sri Vaishnavism’ so nicely brought out by Dr. C. Umakantham, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati. I know full well that Dr. Umakantham imbibed in the doctrine of Saranagati and years together studied constantly the ancient texts and prepared this book with great dedication and devotion on Alwars and Acharyas.

Sri Vaishnavism is a unique word in the sense that it enlightens the characteristics of Vishnu, who is all Pervader, Creator of Universe and so on as revealed in Vedas and Vedanta. The word ‘Sri’ signifies the inseparable relationship of Mahalakshmi with Vishnu, as His Consort and Mother of all creatures. It is also to be known that in Vishnuloka, with a view to uplifting the people from Samsara, Vishnu emerged as Mahavishnu on a Sravana Star and His Consort emerged as Lakshmi in the Lotus and Vishnu preached the three Rahasyas i.e. Tirumantra, Dvaya and Charama Sloka to Her. In turn, She taught them to Vishvaksena. With the fond hope of redeeming the people from Samsara and at the behest of Lakshmi, Vishvaksena descended from Vaikunta and did

Upadesa on the three Rahasyas to Nammalvar in Alwar Tirunagari. The central theme of three Rahasyas is that the Lord is the means to attain Moksha by Surrendring oneself. Actually, the Dvaya Mantra, called Mantra Ratna, speaks about Saranagati and the very Mantra is called Saranagati. Nammalvar, popularly known as Prapannajanakutasta, did Saranagati at the flower adorned feet of Lord Srinivasa. His Prabandham Tiruvoymozhi is called Deerga Saranagati. The quintessence of Saranagati was propagated by Acharyas beginning from Sriman Nathamunigal down to Manavala Mamunigal. Hence, Saranagati has a unique place in Sri Vaishnavism.

Philosophically, the nature of soul varies in the varied School of Thoughts viz. Carvaka, Nyaya Vaisesikha, Advaita and so on. But the philosophy of Vedanta which has a school of Sri Vaishnavism underlines the essential nature of soul as servitude to God. Beginning the Chapter of the book, Dr. Umakantham ably showed the importance of soul in Sri Vaishnavism and developed the topic of Saranagati from Vedas down to Alwars' hymns. Tracing the origin of Saranagati in Rig Veda, he elucidated the philosophy of Saranagati as spoken in Upanishads like Chandokya and Katha. The impact of Saranagati on Drudarastra, Prahlada, Gajendra and Ambarisha is an example for the practice of Saranagati.

The systematisation of Saranagati by Acharyas like Yamunacharya, Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika is well portrayed in Chapter III.

Dr. Umakantham does well in presenting the three Rahasyas i.e. Tirumantra, Dvaya and Charama Sloka with word to word

meaning as analysed by Pillai Lokacharya, Vedanta Desika, besides Manavala Mamuni's commentary on Rahasyas.

The characteristics of Prapanna is a mine of information in Chapter V.

The interlink of Bhakti and Saranagati, as eyes of one, finds elaborative exposition in Chapter VI.

Dr. Umakantham, after an indepth study of varied texts, assiduously tries to give an astounding observation that Saranagati is the easy Sadhana, through Acharya Abhimana for the upliftment of people from Samsara.

Dr. Umakantham deserves our hearty congratulations for the splendid work he has done, assuming himself as a Bhagavata.

I am sure this book will find a place in the shelves of University Libraries as a guide for young scholars who have thirst for knowledge and wish to specialise in Sri Vaishnavism.

(M. VARADARAJAN)

PREFACE

Since my school days, I have been fascinated towards Sri Vaishnavism, a religious philosophy which gives God realisation to man. This was further intensified by my devotion to Lord Sri Venkateswara of Tirumala, who is the Supreme deity of this Universe – a truth which dawned on me later. With this conviction, I did my post graduation in Philosophy at Sri Venkateswara University in the year 1978. Having had the taste of Sri Vaishnavism, Prof. M. Veeraiah Garu gave the topic in the field of Vaishnavism for my Ph.D. Research Programme and ably guided me. To this field of research, I was further drawn by late Sri U.Ve.T.K. Gopalaswamy Iyengar Swami, an erudite scholar in Sanskrit and a descendant of Acharya Periya Tirumalai Nambi of 10th century.

Sri Vaishnavism preaches the Vedic truths of Saranagati. The doctrine of Saranagati was further enlightened by Alvars in *Nalayara Divya Prabhandam*. It was during the period from 10th to 15th century the doctrine of Saranagati was further enriched by Acharyas beginning from Sriman Nathamunigal, Yamunacharya, Sri Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya, Vedanta Desika, Manavala Mamuni and scores of other Acharyas. The legacy that they left years ago paved way for the propagation of Sri Vaishnavism during 20th century by the galaxy of traditional scholars like - Kaanchi Mahamahopadyaya Jagadacharya Simhasenadhipathi U.Ve.Prathivadibhayankaram Annangaracharya Swami, Sri U.Ve. Karappankadu Venkatacharya

Swami of Chennai, Abhinava Desika Sri. U.Ve. Uttamur Veeraraghavacharya Swami, Adyathma Bhaskara Vaak Amruthavarshi Sri U.Ve.K. Varadacharya Swami of Chennai were among the scholars whose names worth to mention.

In the recent past, the following crusaders like Sri Vaishnava Simhmam Sri U.Ve. S. Krishnaswamy Iyengar Swami (Sri Vaishnava Sudarsanam, Trichy), Sri U.Ve. M.R. Rajagopala Iyengar, Sri U.Ve. Prof. N.S. Anantarangachar of Mysore, Sri U.Ve. Prof. V.V. Ramanujam Swami (Ethiraja Paduka, Chennai), Sri U.Ve. Prof. M. Narasimhachari of University of Madras, Sri U.Ve. Dr. J. Parthasarathy Swami (Ramanuja Vani), Sri U.Ve. Prof. V.K.S.N. Raghavan, and Sri U.Ve. Prof. M.A. Venkatakrishnan of Vaishnavism Dept., University of Madras, Sri U. Ve. A. Krishnamacharya Swamy (Sri Vaishnava Sri, Srirangam) and others did yeomen service for the development of Sri Vaishnavism. I profusely thank the above scholars of excellence and prostate before them with great reverence.

Since the advent of my ambition to bring out this book on the topic entitled 'Greatness of Saranagati in Sri Vaishnavism', I have had the golden opportunity to have the constant blessings of Sri Vaishnava Simhmam Octogenarian Nyaya Vedanta Vidwan Sri U.Ve. T.A. Krishnamacharya Swami, an erudite scholar in Ubhaya Vedanta and a descendant of Acharya Tirumalai Ananthavan of 11th century, who is a prime teacher to my Acharya Sri U.Ve. Dr. M. Varadarajan Swami, Dept. of Tamil, S.V. University. I pay my sincere obeisance to Sri U.Ve. T.A. Krishnamacharya Swami. It was, his disciple Dr. Varadarajan Swami, who inspired me by explaining the inner truths of my topic with original texts like Alvars' Hymns with commentaries, Vedarthasamgraha, Mumukshupadi, Sri Vacanabhushanam, Tatvatraya etc. for over two years which enabled me to lay my pen to write this sacred book.

The objective of this book is to give a critical and comprehensive account on the greatness of Saranagati in Sri Vaishnavism with special reference to Sri Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika. This work is exclusively confined to Vaishnavism only because it is not found necessary to attempt any comparison with Advaita Vedanta. This book is based on Tamil, Sanskrit and Manipravala original texts of Sri Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika, and others. Sanskrit words from original texts are used to the extent possible and accepted English equivalent words are given. For instance, the word 'Saranagati' is generally referred as Prapatti or Self-surrender because it has a particular connotation in Vaishnava Philosophy for which the other terms do not seem to be adequate.

With this sheer interest in Ubhaya Vedanta of Sri Vaishnavism, I have made a maiden effort in preparing this book. As I am not a traditional scholar, there may be some lapses, but as a Sri Vaishnavite, I have prepared this book with great reverence. I welcome suggestions, if any, for improving this work from the scholars of Srivaishnavism which I can incorporate them in the next edition of the book.

Firstly, I am highly indebted to my teacher and guide Prof. M. Veeraiah Garu M.A. (Hons.), Ph.D. Former Head and BOS, Dept. of Philosophy, S.V. University, Tirupati for having introduced me to this field of research, but for whose constant encouragement and guidance I would not have completed my Ph.D. work. He was the one who generated interest in me to carry out research in the field of Sri Vaishnavism. I feel that mere thanks to him would be insufficient for all that I had received from him.

I thank Sri U.Ve. Dr. M. Varadarajan Swami, M.A., Ph.D. Dept. of Tamil, Sri Venkateswara University, without whose thought provoking and meaningful discussions, this book would not have

seen the light of the day in this form. Also, I am always beholden to him for having written a nice foreword to this book despite his several pre-occupations. He was an instrumental cause in publishing this book.

I express my deep sense of gratitude to Prof. C. Ramaiah Garu, M.A. (Hons.) Ph.D. Formerly Dean of Academic affairs, S.V. University and Former Head and BOS, Dept. of Philosophy, S.V. University whose constant encouragement and suggestions helped me in shaping this book in the present form. Prof. Ramaiah Garu is a versatile scholar and an authority in both Indian and Western philosophy.

I am highly thankful to Prof. B. Sambasiva Prasad Garu, M.A., Ph.D. for having gone through some of the chapters which certainly added depth to this book. I am also thankful to my departmental colleagues who created a congenial atmosphere so as to enable me to publish this book without any hassle.

This book is being published with the financial aid of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), Tirupati, under their scheme 'Aid to publish religious books'. For this, I must offer my thanks to Sri. Dr. P. Krishnaiah Garu, M.Sc., Ph.D., I.A.S., Executive Officer, TTD, for granting the financial aid to publish this sacred book.

My grateful thanks are due to Saraswati Putra, Satavadani Chakravarthi Dr. Medasani Mohan Garu, M.A., Ph.D., Director, Annamacharya Project, TTD and to Prof. H.S. Brahmananda Garu, M.A., Ph.D., Secretary, Dharma Prachara Parishad, TTD whose useful suggestions definitely added the quality to my book. My thanks are due to Dr. N.S. Ramamurthy Garu, M.A., editor, Sapthagiri, TTD Journal for his kind co-operation in publishing this book.

I thank my wife Mrs. Usha Rani M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D., Associate Professor of English who stood by my side during innumerable inconveniences.

I thank my close friends Dr. V. Poornachandra Reddy, M.A., Ph.D., Project Director, RASS and Dr. M. Dhananjaya Naidu, M.Sc., Ph.D., Asst. Professor, Dept. of Bio Technology, S.V. University, Tirupati for their constant encouragement.

Finally, I thank Sri. B.G. Sreedhar, B.E., Proprietor, University Xerox and Offset Printers and his staff for their untiring help in carrying out the printing work and especially for the cover design of this book.

(C. Umakantham)

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INTRODUCTION

The origin of Sri Vaishnavism is well portrayed in Sri Vishnupurana. It is based on Vedic thoughts. Alwars were the early crusaders of Srivaishnavism. The main truths and principles of this school of thought laid foundation by its exponents like Sriman Nathamunigal, Yamunacharya, Ramanuja and so on. The prime exponent of Sri Vaishnavism is Sri Ramanuja. His nine works are: Vedarthasamgraha, Sri Bhasya, Githarthasamgraha, Vedanta Deepa, Vedanta Sara, Saranagati Gadya, Sriranga Gadya, Vaikunta Gadya and Nitya Granda. All these works reiterates the Vedic thoughts to the society on the Supremacy of Lord Sriman Narayana. Sri Ramanuja established 74 Simhasenadhipatis to preach and propagate the principles of Sri Vaishnava Philosophy in the length and breath of this country. It is necessary to think of 74 Simhasenadhipatis who have contributed for the development of Sri Vaishnavism during their period and gave utmost importance for the doctrine of Saranagati. The 74 Simhasenadhipatis are given under :

1. Sottai Nambi, Ennachchan, Pillai Appan, 2. Pundareekakshar, 3. Therkkazvan, 4. Sundaratholudaiyar, 5. Ramanujan and Pillai Tirumalai Nambi, 6. Bhattar and Seeramapillai, 7. Kandadai Andan, 8. Naduvilazhwan, 9. Gomadaththalwan, 10. Tirukkivilu-

razhwan, 11. Tirumogurazhwan, 12. Pillai-p-Pillai-Azhwan, 13. Nadathur Azhwan, 14. Engal Azhwan, 15. Ananthazhwan, 16. Milagazhwan, 17. Neyyundazhwan, 18. Settalur Ciriyaazhwan, 19. Vedantiazhwan, 20. Koilazhwan, 21. Ukkalazhwan, 22. Aranapuraththazhwan, 23. Embar, 24. Kidambiachchan, 25. Kaniyanur Ciriyaachchan, 26. Echchampadi Achchan, 27. Kongil Achchan, 28. Echchampadi Jeer, 29. Tirumalai Nallan, 30. Chattampalli Jeer, 31. Tiruvellara Jeer, 32. Atkondavilli Jeer, 33. Tirunagaripillan, 34. Karanchi SomayaJeeyar, 35. Alankara Venkatachar, 36. Nambi Karundevan, 37. Siruppalli Devaraja Bhattar, 38. Pillai Yurandaiyudaiyar, 39. Tirukkurugai Piran Pillan, 40. Periyakoil Vallalar, 41. Tirukkannapuraththraiya, 42. Asuripperumal, 43. Munipperumal, 44. Ammangipperumal, 45. Maruthipperiyandan, 46. Marondrilla Maruthi Siriyandan, 47. Somasiandan, 48. Jeeyarandan, 49. Eswarandan, 50. Eyunni Pillai Andan, 51. Periyandan, 52. Siriyandan, 53. Kurinchiyur Ciriyaandan, 54. Ammangi Andan, 55. Alavandar Andan, 56. Arulalapperumal Emberumanar, 57. Tondanur Nambi, 58. Marudur Nambi, 59. Mazhavur Nambi, 60. Tirukkurunkudi Nambi, 61. Kuravai Nambi, 62. Mudumbai Nambi, 63. Vaduka Nambi, 64. Vangipuraththu Nambi, 65. Sri Parankusa Nambi, 66. Ammangi Ammal, 67. Paruththi Kollai Ammal, 68. Ukkalammal, 69. Sottai Ammal, 70. Mudumbai Ammal, 71. Komandur Pillai, 72. Komandur Ilayamal, 73. Kidambi Perumal, 74. Arkattu Pillan.

The concept of Sri Vaishnavism can be traced by knowing the Tatva, Hita and Purushartha. These are the essence of Vedas. The earliest Acharya Yamunacharya, in his Siddhitraya, exuberantly elaborated the nature of soul, the nature of matter and the nature

of Iswara, Following him, Ramanuja elicited more poignantly the essence of Sri Vaishnavism through his writings.

Sri Vaishnavism is a significant system of Indian Philosophical tradition. Acharyas like Sri Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika were the chief propounders of this system. Their Vedantic expositions were effective base for Sri Vaishnavism.

Sri Vaishnavism is highly efficacious and independent system. This system is an unfolding of the explanations and message of the Prasthanatrayas – Upanishads, Brahma-Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita. Ramanuja, in his exposition of Vedanta, deals with the wholeness of the vision, while Pillai Lokacharya developed the system in a easy understandable way, through his works like Astadasarahasya. Later Vedanta Desika reiterated the necessity and significance of Saranagati in his works like Rahasyatrayasara etc. According to Ramanuja, Brahman is Omniscient, Eternal, Supreme and appropriating the finite selves as its modes.

There are thirty two Brahma Vidyas mentioned in different Upanishads. Taittiriya Upanishad states that the concept of Saranagati or Nyasa – Vidya finds its place as a means for attaining Moksha. For Ramanuja, there are two important Sadhanas namely Bhakti and Saranagati to attain Moksha. Just as Brahman does not cancel but fulfils the finite, so also Bhakti does not cancel the intellectual and moral values but put them in perfect order. Bhakti can be defined as a constant loving remembrance of God with faith, whereas, Saranagati is a meeting point of human effort and divine grace and it is the place in which human effort exhausts completely and transfers his entire responsibilities to the God's grace.

The unique contribution of Sri Vaishnavism is the exposition of the doctrine of Saranagati. It is called by different names such as Prapatti, Upayatva Prarthana, Nyasavidya, Nikeseparaksa, Bharanyasa, Sadhya Bhakti, Atmaniksepa, Atmasamarpana etc. In the following verse of the Ahirbudhnya Samhita.

*“Samitsadhanakadinam Yajnanam nyasamitmanah
namasa yokarod deva sa ssvadhvara udiritah”.*

(Ahirbudhnya Samhita, 37)

the word ‘Namaha’ is significantly used to mean the self-surrender or Saranagati : Literally the word ‘Saranagati’ means ‘one who has fallen at the Lotus Feet of the Lord seeking refuge from all dangers and sins’. The path of Saranagati is open to all people irrespective of caste, creed, religion, sex, time or place, or gender for communion with God.

Though Bhakti and Saranagati are accepted Sadhanas to attain Mukti, Bhakti Marga could be practiced by a few, whereas Saranagati is open to all to practice. Bhakti needs certain important pre-conditions which were prescribed by the scriptures. Only those who are fit for observing Vedic-rites and who are authroised to read the Vedas are eligible to practice Bhakti. The three higher class people namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas are eligible to practice Bhakti, but the Sudras are not eligible. As there are certain conditions for Varnasrama Dharmas, there are also certain conditions for Asramadharma too. The Sutrakara declares that an aspirant of any one of the four Asramas is allowed to practice Bhakti because Dharmas help him towards the perfection of Upasanas. Thus, Bhakti requires certain preconditions and does not permit all castes to practice it. But Ramanuja allowed each

and everyone those who are interested to know to follow Saranagati-sadhana irrespective of their competence and social status. Thus Saranagati is open to all.

Bhagavata Purana speaks about the nine forms of Bhakti viz., Sravanam, Kirthanam, Vishnorsmaranam, Padasevanam, Archanam, Vandanam, Dasyam, Sakhyam and Atmanivedanam¹. Among these nine ways, the first three relates to contemplation and other three explains divine activities and last three namely, Dasyam (doing service to Lord), Sakhyam (making a type of relationship with Lord) and Atmanivedanam (offering of self to God) explains Saranagati. The development of Bhakti is seen in Saranagati in the awakening of Divine grace. The doctrine of Bhakti is like a ladder facilitating a linkage between earth and heaven whereas, Saranagati makes a connection between heaven and earth. The important requirements of Bhakti are : (a) clear knowledge about the Sadhanas such as Karma, Janana and Bhakti besides willingness to undergo severe practice at all times; (b) qualification of birth such as Brahmins or Kastriyas or Vaisyas; (c) Satvic patience to endure any delay to attain Moksha because all the Prarabdha Karmas have to be exhausted. If a Bhakta commits a small mistake, the whole exercise of Bhakti will collapse like pack of cards. But when Bhakta overcomes all temptations by strictly following the philosophy of Bhakti, he will reach the Vaikunta, the abode of Lord Vishnu. The roads of Bhakti are full of ups and downs. That is why the saying goes 'Bhakti is like a bridge of hair built upon the river of fire'. From the above discussion it is clear that Bhakti is a Sadhana that cannot be followed by all person because of its pre-conditions like Sastrajnana, birth etc.

1. Bhagavata Purana, 7-5-23.

Yamunacharya says in his Stotra Ratna as follows :

*Na dharmamanistosmi na catmavedi
na bhaktimam stvaccaranaravinde |
akincano ananyagatissaranya
tvatpadamulam saranam prapadye ||*

It means, the path of surrender (Saranagati) is open for one who is unable to follow the path of action (Karmayoga), knowledge (Jnanayoga) and devotion (Bhaktiyoga), and who has no other way of salvation.² In view of this, Ramanuja offered Saranagati as an alternative Moksha Sadhana for ignorant people who has no Sastric knowledge. Commenting the Stotraratna the verse above, Vedanta Desikha very lucidly said about the general and most accepted definitions for Saranagati as follows :

- i *Ahamasmyaparadhanamalayokincano gatihi
tvamevopayabtuto me bhaveti prarthanamatihi
Saranagatirityukta sa deva smin prayujyatam*

It means “Prapatti or Saranagati is a state of mind praying to the Lord that He alone should become the means of saving the devotee, associated with the realisation that the devotee is utterly helpless, sinful and without any other hope of salvation.”^{2a}

- i *Ananyasadhye svabhiste mahavisvasapurvakam
tadekopayatva yacna prapattis saranagatihi*

2 Vedanta Desika's commentary on Sloka 22 of Stotra Ratna, p.62, quoted in, contribution of Yamuna to Visistadvaita, M. Narasimhachari, p.79 & 80.

2a Desika's commentaries on Stotra Ratna, p.62. quoted in, Contribution of Yamuna to Visistadvaita, M. Narasimhachari, p.81.

It means “Prapatti or Saranagati is a state of prayerfulness of mind associated with the firm conviction that the Lord alone is the saviour and there is no other way of attaining Him except by absolute self-surrender”.³

Prof. P.N. Srinivasachari observes : Ramanuja assures God to all irrespective of caste or creed and provides an alternative Sadhana for weak people to attain Moksha which is known as Prapatti or Saranagati.⁴ Prof. S.N.Das Gupta says that the Prapatti or Saranagati, as seeking protection of God, is not restricted by any limiting conditions of holy or unholy places, or any special time, or of any special mode, or any caste restriction, or that it can produce only this or that result. When God accepts through Saranagati, He forgives all his faults of commission and omission. The only fault he does not forgive is insincerity or cruelty (Kraurya).⁵

Here, whatever may be the definition of Saranagati, the main requirement for Saranagati is that one should completely surrender one's duties and responsibilities to the God in the form of prayer with supreme Faith or Mahavisvasa without egoism, while quoting from Sri Vachana Bhusanam, Prof. Das Gupta further says as follows : “When the person who has sincerely adopted the path of Saranagati must annihilate altogether even the last traces of egoism. On the one side, egoism means ignorance, for it is only by false knowledge that a man asserts himself as having an independent

3 Desika's commentaries on Stotra Ratna, p.62. quoted in, Contribution of Yamuna to Visistadvaita, M. Narasimhachari, p.81.

4 The Philosophy of Visistadvaita, p.382.

5 History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. III, p.376.

being. On the other side, egoism means insincerity (Kraurya). The fundamental requirements of Saranagati therefore consists in the annihilation of egoism. It is only through the annihilation of egoism that the perfect self-surrender or Saranagati is possible.⁶

The present work makes a sincere attempt to study the philosophical contributions made by the Srivaishnava saints, seers and thinkers to the doctrine of Saranagati. The main source of this study are the original works of Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya's Astadasarahasyas, Vedanta Desika's Rahasyatrayasara etc. to explain this doctrine. Besides these, other important works in Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu were also consulted.

This book consists of seven chapters. The first chapter deals with the Nature and destiny of the individual soul as enlightened in Charavaka, Jainism, Buddhism, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Sankhya, Mimamsa and Advaita. The discussion focusses on the ontological position of the individual self as real entity as the Supreme Brahman though adjectival in nature is well discussed according to Visistadvaita. The finite selves are infinite which are different from body on one hand and the Supreme Brahman on the other. The summum bonum of the individual self is to attain Moksha, is the main theme of Sri Vaishnavism which is well elicited in this chapter.

The Chapter II deals with the philosophical antecedents to the doctrine of Saranagati. This chapter is exclusively devoted to trace the Saranagati in the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavata Purana, Sri Ramayana, Bhagavad Gita and lastly in the works of Alvars. The Prapatti is an intrinsic truth of Vedas which ordains that an

⁶ Srivachanabhusanavyakya, quoted in, History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. III, p. 378 and 379.

individual self should cultivate a life of devotion and Godliness for attaining Moksha. Unflinching faith in Divine guidance is implicit in the entire mass of the holy texts. The Upanishads, which are significant mouthpiece of Vedas, have also ordained Saranagati. The Bhagavad Gita which is a repository of the quintessence of all the teachings in the Upanishads professes in an unmistakable terms about the significance of Saranagati as a means to attain Moksha. The Bhagavata Purana and Ramayana are abounding in the references to Sarangati. Of course, Sri Ramayana is described as Saranagati Veda, in which the instance of Vibhisana's Sarangati to Rama is enshrined as the very essence of Ramayana.

The chapter III deals with the systematisation of Saranagati as shown by Acharyas. This contains the essentials of Saranagati as codified by Yamunacharya, Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika; development of Vaishnavism, particularly the theory of Saranagati as dealt with by Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika; the five / six accessories of Saranagati and the incidents from Sri Ramayana are dealt with here. Apart from this, this chapter deals with requirements of Saranagati and types of Saranagati.

In chapter IV, I have elaborately explained the greatness of three Rahasyas i.e., Tirumantra, Dvaya and Charama Sloka by quoting from the Sutras and commentaries of Pillai Lokacharya and Manavala Mamuni respectively and also Rahastrayasara of Vedanta Desika.

Chapter V, introduces the conduct and duties of Prapanna covering the routine duties like Abhigamana, Upadana, Ijya, Svadayam and Yogam with examples from Varthamala, Srivachana Bhushanam and Rahasyatrayasara.

The VI chapter deals with Bhakti and Saranagati wherein I enumerated the theme of Bhakti in Vedas, meaning of Bhakti, types of Bhakti besides explaining the relationship of Jiva and God and merits of Saranagati.

Chapter VII discusses the doubts relating to the competence or Adhikara, Nature or Swarupa, accessories or Angas of Saranagati and establishes the supremacy of Saranagati.

Finally the main conclusion of the work are attempted and comprehensive bibliography is appended.



CHAPTER – I

NATURE AND DESTINY OF SOUL

The nature and destiny of soul is the noblest of all investigations. The Visistadvaita which has had a hoary antiquity, focussed its attention and reasoning on the subject of meaning and purpose of man's life. The sages, and philosophers of India were profoundly interested in the study of what soul is and what it should aim at? So, the concept of soul plays an important role in the Indian philosophical tradition. The entire edifice of Indian philosophy is based on soul. Some of the important questions that originate in this context are : What is the nature of soul? Is soul many or one? Do souls exist independently or Do they depend on Supreme Soul being its modes? Such questions are discussed thread bare from the dawn of Indian philosophical enquiry. Different schools of Indian philosophy held different views of self or soul in tune with their metaphysical pre-suppositions.

The Carvaka School holds the view that there is no such thing as an immutable self, spiritual in nature over and above the body. According to them, self is nothing but the name given to the body made up of four ultimate elements namely, earth, water, fire and

liberation. It is distinct from body, senses and mind (Manas). Bondage is due to ignorance and Karma, liberation is due to knowledge and destruction of Karma.³

The next one Sankhya system believes in two realities – Purusha and Prakruti. Purusha is self and spirit. It is the subject as well as the knower. According to them the existence of self can be proved by having the feeling of one's own undoubted nature that 'We all have selves'. It exists and survives because it is a self-manifest. It is different from mind, body, senses, brain and conscious states. It is a conscious spirit and a subject of knowledge and never an object of knowledge. Ultimately it is a pure consciousness as such and consciousness is its essence and not a quality. When one who knows the difference of Purusha and Prakruti will attain liberation. That means the knowledge of difference between Purusha and Prakruti itself is Moksha.

Like the Naiyayikas, the Mimamsakas are pluralists and realists. They believe in reality of self. The self is eternal, infinite and substratum of consciousness. To them the consciousness is not an essence of self. They believe in the plurality of selves and the law of Karma (an unseen power or Apurva). After liberation the self remains as pure substance without any consciousness and bliss.

In Advaita, there is only one Supreme Reality who is none other than Brahman. The Jiva is nothing but the reflection of Brahman conditioned by Avidya. The Jiva in its empirical level has three coats namely Sthulasarira, Suksmasarira and Karanasarira. The Sthulasarira is identified with the food coat, the Suksmasarira is identified with mind, consciousness and finally the Karanasarira

is identified with the sheath of bliss. The cycle of births and deaths relates to Sthulasarira only. This Sarira is the linkage between one Janma and other Janma. When Jnana emerges Ajnana will be dispelled in Jiva, then there is an end to the cycle of births and deaths. At this stage Avidya is also completely extinguished and finally Sthula and Suksmasariras are dropped away and Jiva will cease to be the Jiva and raises to original stature i.e. Brahman.

According to Visistadvaita school of thought, the soul as in Samkhya is different from twenty four categories of Prakruti. It is one of the three reals, the other two being Brahman and Prakruti. Prakruti is composed of the five elements or Bhutas, the five subtle elements or Tanmatras, the five sense-organs or Pancendriyas, the five motor organs, Manas, Buddhi and Ahamkara. The soul is the twenty fifth category. It is spiritual whereas Prakruti and its modifications are material.

The soul according to Visistadvaita is ontologically different from Brahman on the one hand and matter on the other. The fact that it is different from Brahman should not be understood as it is independent of Brahman. The soul is a body of Brahman, while body is controlled and governed by the soul, the soul is controlled and governed by Brahman. The Visistadvaita distinguishes from body and sense organs from the mind. As stated already, Carvaka equates soul (consciousness) with the body. The Visistadvaita School does not accept the Carvaka point of view. According to the former, the soul cannot be identified either with any one part of the body or with all the parts put together. The body being inert, it can never generate consciousness which constitutes the essence of the soul. As the consciousness or Caitanya is essentially

different from matter, it cannot be derived from matter. The presence of consciousness in man, therefore is different from body or matter. Hence according to Visistadvaita, the consciousness is the same as soul or self or Atma.

The Naiyayikas believe that consciousness is only an accidental property of the self that arises in it under certain conditions. The self according to them is essentially unconscious. Consciousness originates in the self when it is brought into relation with the external objects through mind and the senses. When it is severed of such relations with the external world or with the internal world (mind), it remains unconscious. As against Naiyayikas, the followers of Visistadvaita hold the view that the self is essentially conscious. It is self luminous and guides the body, senses and mind in all their actions. It is for this reason that Visistadvaita believes that the self which is conscious and blissful needs to be kept apart from the body or matter which is devoid of consciousness and bliss. This view of Visistadvaita is also enlightened in Bhagavad Gita.⁴

According to Visistadvaita the soul is different from sense-organs. It should be understood that sense organs are only the channels of knowledge and consciousness and are not by themselves the nature of knowledge and consciousness. Sense-organs being parts of the body (material in nature), they cannot generate consciousness or knowledge. The soul which is of the nature of consciousness works through these channels of knowledge and obtains knowledge of the objects of world.

The soul is to be demarcated from mind. The mind is only a Karana or instrument of knowledge and never a Karta or Jnata, whereas soul is Karta and Jnata.⁵ Further, mind being an evaluate

of Satvic, it is non-eternal whereas the soul is eternal. The soul is also different from Pranas. The Pranas being Vayuvisesas or particular type of Vayu, we cannot attribute consciousness to them. On the other hand, the soul, being spiritual is of the nature of consciousness. The consciousness cannot be attributed to the Pranas either singularly or collectively. Therefore the self which is of the essence of consciousness is different from the Pranas.

The self is both doer and enjoyer of the fruits of his deeds. This is evident from the views of Brahma Sutra that the self is an agent.⁶ It must be however noted that the doership of the soul is subordinate to the Supreme Brahman. This does not mean that Brahman deprives the soul of its free will or the soul is not responsible for its actions. Despite the fact that Brahman, space and time are involved in the doership of the soul, they are only causes in general and not in particular. Karma of each one constitutes the specific cause of the actions of each soul. Thus the Brahman of Visistadvaita cannot be ascribed partially or wholly.

Following the scriptures, the Visistadvaitins opine that the self is of the nature of truth, knowledge and infinite (Satyam, Jnanam, Anantham). It is of the nature consciousness the self knows itself. It is not in need of another consciousness to know it. The Visistadvaitins distinguish two kinds of consciousness namely consciousness by which it apprehends itself called Dharmijnana and consciousness through which the soul apprehends all things other than itself known as Dharmabhutajnana. Hence the soul is described as self-luminous and is not subjected to origination and destruction. It has no beginning and end. It is eternal. It is also immutable.

Like Samkhya, the Visistadvaita admits the plurality of souls. There are as many souls in the world as there are psychorganisms. The Visistadvaitins argue that if there is only one self, then pain and pleasure of one should result in pain and pleasure to all; One's birth and death would lead to birth and death to all. As this is not the case, it is believed that the selves are many. This is other wise called Samasti Vachakam, as if one points out grain it means a bag of grain. Like wise though souls are many, which is called Jatyekavachakam.

Visistadvaita classifies selves into three kinds namely those that are bound by Karma at all times called Nityasamsari or Bhadhatma; those who redeemed from Samsara through Acharya's grace are called Muktas; and those who eternally free from Samsara and permanently staying in Vaikunta are called Nityas like Visvakshena, Garuda, Anantha and so on. To Sankara the self is consciousness, knowledge and bliss. We cannot distinguish consciousness from the substratum of consciousness, knowledge from possession of knowledge, bliss from one who enjoys bliss. On the contrary, Ramanuja holds the view that the self is not merely consciousness but the substratum of consciousness, not mere knowledge but one who possesses knowledge as its essential attribute. In this way, Ramanuja's conception of self differs from that of Sankara.

It is the conviction of Ramanuja that the self is not merely a knower but also a doer. The doership of the self is not accepted by Sankara. The Jiva according to Ramanuja is not all pervading or Vibhu but atomic. The idea of the self as an all-pervading agent is not compatible with scriptural assertions that it goes out of the body and enters some other body.⁷

The Jiva, described by Ramanuja is eternal and immutable. It has no beginning, middle and end. It does not undergo any change or Parinama. Although it is eternal and immutable, it always depends on God. It is inseparably related to God and this relation is called Aprthaksiddhi. When Brahman is substance, the Jiva is its attribute or Guna; if Brahman is Master; the self is its servant; when Brahman is a whole, the self is its part; if Brahman is dictator, the self is dictated. Although it has a being of its own it always dependent on Brahman. According to him, Jiva is pure and perfect in its intrinsic nature. But when it conducts its activities with spiritual discipline like Saranagati, it overcomes the limitations of matter and gets restored to its natural status i.e., pure soul. In its natural status, it finds its place in Vaikunta the abode of the Lord, lives eternally and enjoys the bliss in the presence of the Lord.

Pillai Lokacharya says that there are four stages of Saranagati wherein four obstacles occur. The four stages are : (a) Jnanadasa (b) Varnadasa (c) Praptadasa and (d) Prapyanubhavadasa. In Jnanadasa, Ajnana will obstruct; In Varnadasa Apoorti will obstruct; In Praptidasa, Arthi will obstruct and in Prapynubhavadasa, Abhinivesa will obstruct. Pillai Lokacharya further says that Ajnana will be eradicated by the knowledge of Acharya; Apoorthi will be eradicated by the completeness of Iswara; Arthi will be eradicated by His grace and Abhinivesa will be erased by experience.⁸ Thus on the whole the destiny of soul is that everyone can attain Moksha by practicing Sadhana. Saranagati Sadhana is an easy and within the reach of everyone irrespective of caste, creed, religion, gender, time etc. by constant faith on God.

In the next chapter, it is proposed to survey the historical development of the notion of the Saranagati from the times of Vedas to the period of Alvars.

References

1. Sri Gunaratna Kosa, commentary on Saddarsana, p.74.
2. C.D. Sarma, A critical survey of Indian Philosophy, p.66.
3. Ibid, p.208.
4. Bhagavad Gita, II, 13 to 25.
5. Nyayasiddhanjanam, p.212.
6. Brahma Sutra. 11-3-33.
7. Svetasvataropanishad, V. 8-9, Mundakopanishad, 111, 1.9.
8. Pillai Lokacharya, Srivachana Bhushana, Sutras. 291 to 293.



PHILOSOPHICAL ANTECEDENTS TO THE DOCTRINE OF SARANAGATI

The doctrine of Saranagati is not a first creation of Ramanuja or Pillai Lokacharya or Vedanta Desika. It has to be traced to Vedas and development to Upanishads, Itihasas, Puranas and devotional hymns of Alvars. Hence, the doctrine of Saranagati is as old as Indian philosophy. But Ramanuja has popularised this doctrine to reach the common people, whereas Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika systematised and enriched this doctrine as an independent Sadhana for attaining Moksha. This chapter aims at tracing the evolution of Saranagati in ancient Indian thought from Vedas down to the utterances of Alvars.

Saranagati or Prapatti in Vedas

The idea of Saranagati has its origin in the Vedas mostly in Rig Veda. According to which, the path of Saranagati or self-surrender to Lord is the only means to Moksha. It gives an immeasurable solace to the soul at every stage for one who practises it. Hence Saranagati is the vital truth embedded in the Vedas and not drawn from outside. This is clear when it is said : *“Mura amura na vayam cikitvaha”*. - It means that a man who

is insignificant cannot realize the truth without the help of God. He is described as everything to man. On realizing his utter helplessness or Akinachanya, man prays God to help him and lead him to the highest aspirations. This shows that even an insignificant man is capable of realizing the highest truth by surrendering himself at the feet of God.¹ And God is described as everything to man at every stage of life. It clearly implies that God's grace and guidance are essential to make man's efforts successful. Therefore, man's emancipation is completely dependent upon God's grace. The same thought is echoed in the form of Bhakti and Saranagati in the following Rig Vedic hymns as observed by Prof. N.S. Anantha Rangachari in his work 'The Philosophy of Sadhana in Visistadvaita.'

"Vayamindra tvayavavsakhatvamarabha mhe" (Rig.VX-133-6)

"Tvamasmakam tva smasi" (Rig.V. VIII-92-32).

"Agne naya supatha raye sman" (Rig.V. 1-189-1).

"Sriye te Pada duva amimikshuhu" (Rig.V. VI-29-3).

"Ayami te nama uktimta jushasva" (Rig.V. III-14-2).

Again it describes God as "*Neta-Agnirneta*".² - a leader who leads us to peace and happiness from the trials and tribulations of life and depict God as : "*Jananam Jamihi mitraha preyaha*" which means a close friend and relation to all.³ "*Adabdhho gopa amurtasya rakshita*" - It means God is called the saviour of the world whom none could obstruct.⁴ Again it is said "*Nahi tvadanyaha puruhuta kascana maghavannasti mardita*". It means God saves people who take refuge in Him from the ocean of Samsara by His grace.⁵ Again it is shown "*Dhanvanniva prapa asi*" which means God is like a spring of water in the midst

of a sandy desert⁶ and “*Daiveem navam svaritramanagasam asravanteem aaruhema svastaye*” it means God is like a non-leaking boat that can safely take us to the shore in the disturbed waters of life.⁷ Again it is referred “*Aatva rambham na jivrayo rarambha savasaspate*”. It points out that “God is compared to a staff on whom the weak and ignorant man can lean and walk happily”.⁸ These references make it clear that a man who is subservient to God and with whose grace he attains bliss, happiness and peace. So to attain God’s grace, one has to surrender absolutely at the lotus feet of the Lord.

The Samhita portions of the Vedas also have the references to the principle of Saranagati. Ahirbudhnya Samhita observes that Saranagati is a kind of prayer making one to realize with strong conviction that the egoistic feeling and the possessive feeling arising out of one’s possession is utterly false. The truth is that man is not independent and has nothing which he calls his own. The Satvata Samhita states : My body, my wealth and my relations do not belong to me, they all belong to God.⁹ The man should also feel that the process of offering himself to God and by drawing God towards him is the only way through which he can understand the highest truth. Thus Samhitas also have the references about Saranagati directly or indirectly.

Though the words like Prapatti or Saranagati or Nyasa-vidya are not found directly in the Samhita portions of the Vedas, but the idea of Saranagati can be gleaned. But the fact is that Saranagati to the highest authority i.e., God is the only means to attain spiritual perfection is clearly implied. Thus the idea of Saranagati has its origin in the Vedas as a means for attainment of spiritual perfection.

Saranagati in Upanishads

The Upanishads which are significant sources of Vedanta have shown the concept of Saranagati freely. The deep rooted teachings of Upanishads have an influence on Srivaishnavism while constructing the doctrine of Saranagati. The Isavasyopanishad directly declares the necessity of Saranagati for self-realization. It says :

*Agne naya supatha raye asman visavani deva
vayunani vidvan |
yuyodhyasmaj juhuranameno bhuyistam te
namuktim vidhema ||*^{9(a)}

It ordains that God is both Prapya or attainer and Prabaka or leader. It advises an aspirant to surrender himself to the Lord with an implicit faith in Him alone. The word ‘Namaukti’ refers to means i.e., Saranagati.¹⁰ The Svetaswataropanishad clearly expounds the necessity of Prapatti or Saranagati for the redemption of the Jiva. In this Upanishad there is an explicitly rooted meanings for Saranagati. It is stated that, To Him who of old, creates Brahma, and who greatly delivers to him the Vedas - That God who is lightened by his own intellect, Do I, being desirous of Moksha, resort as a shelter.¹¹ It shows the necessity of Saranagati for the redumption of Jivatman.

Again the Mantras of the Isavasyopanishad from fifteenth to eighteenth deserve a special mention : Truth’s face is covered with a golden lid, remove that, O Pusan, that I, Truth’s devotee, may know it¹². It is clear that Saranagati is involved here because the concluding portions of the Upasana insists on a total revelation and the prayer for it (remove that O Pusan) has certainly a

temperament of all piety and even desperate demand which exactly conforms to the definition of Saranagati.

The Chandogyopanishad prescribes Saranagati to all to attain immortality. This Upanishad says that only he who surrender himself to God becomes Brahma Samastha. It states :

*“Indram Saranam Prapannobhuvam,
Prajapatim Saranam Prapannobhuvam,
Mrutyum Saranam Prapannobhuvam”.*

which means ‘I surrender to Iswara, I surrender to Prajapathi and I surrender to the God of death. Thus the oldest of the Upanishads enjoys Saranagati to one and all to be immortalised’,¹³ The same Upanishad repeats that “*Brahma samstho amrutatvameti*”. - It means that one would be ‘Brahma samastha’ when one surrender himself to the Paramatma.¹⁴ In the second and fourth Sloka of Mundakopanishad the Pranavamantra ‘OM’ is described, which is nothing but a description of Saranagati. The text says :

*pranavo dhanuhu saro hyatma brahma
tallakshyamucyate |
apramattene veddhayem saravattanmayo bhavet. ||*

Here the Pranava the syllable ‘OM’ is compared to a bow, soul to an arrow and Brahman to the target.¹⁵ Single minded concentration and devotion would enable one to achieve it. Again Saranagati is said to be compared to a Brahmastra which by itself is capable of giving the desired results immediately. The Mahanarayanopanishad explains and glorifies the Saranagati as follows:

Tasmath nyasa mesham tapasamatiriktamahuhu
vasuranyo vibhurasi |
*Brahmane tva mahasa Omityatmanam yunjeetha*¹⁶ ||

In Mumukshupadi ‘OM’ is elaborated as ‘A’ ‘U’ ‘M’ and ‘A’ indicates Paramatma who is Lord Narayana and who is the source of all things, ‘U’ representing Lakshmi and letter ‘M’ indicating Jiva who is supported and benefited by Saranagati.¹⁷

In Katopanishad, we find reference to the doctrine of Saranagati. This Upanishad declares : “This knowledge cannot be obtained through reasoning; Only when it is taught by another; O my dearest, it is capable of being well known. The same knowledge you have attained to, you are firm resolution. O Naciketas, I pray that enquires of us may be like you”.¹⁸

The above passage depicts the importance of Acharyabhimana as one of the important and general condition for Saranagati. In the conclusion it is shown that any one whose resolution is firm must be a Prapanna, is irresistible. The human will is not capable of such determination without the grace of Lord and without being focused in surrender to its destined end. The following expression of such focus is clear in Saranagati. It is stated : “I know that wealth is transitory. Verily that eternity is not attained through things that are transitory. The fire (alter) Naciketas was constructed by me with transitory things. I have therefore attained the eternal”.¹⁹

The above passage traces a description about the fruits of Saranagati both positive and negative realization of futility of the fulfilment of the worldly desires by means of action and consequent attainment of liberation. Mahanarayanopanishad contains references

to the requirements and results of a life of a Prapanna who followed Saranagati as a means to Moksha. This Upanishad observes : “As a result of the consummation of the fruits of highly meritorious deeds... this is brought about association with the righteous. There from is generated the power of discrimination... Thence is generated the proclivity of righteous conduct. Through righteous conduct is brought about the destruction of all sins. Thence the inner and the outer senses attain transparent purity”.²⁰

This Upanishad again proceeds and states: “Thereafter is generated faith in and devotion to Lord Vishnu. Thence springs up detachment. From detachment spring discrimination and knowledge of the world. Through constant practice, that knowledge develops into ripened wisdom”.²¹

In the same Narayanopanishad, we have another elaborate occurrence about the Pranavam mantra which is fundamental source for Saranagati. A honest practice of this Mantra namely ‘OM’ itself is considered to qualify a soul to do Saranagati as the soul (M) is servitude to God (A) in Pranava. The text declares : “The practitioner of this Mantra will attain the abode of Vishnu Vaikunta. This (above of Vishnu) is the white lotus of the heart, the palpable sentience, which shines as a flash of lighting alone. (the Parameswara abiding in it) is the Brahmanya... born of Devaki ... the Vanquisher of the demon Madhu, (Vishnu) alone is Brahmanya. (The sentence known as) Narayana, that is established in all beings, is after all one alone.. what is looked upon as the prime cause .. is in reality, the para-Brahman, that has no cause of its own... This is the sum and substance of the crest of the Atharvaveda”.²² Thus doctrine of Saranagati has its origin in Upanishads.

Saranagati in Bhagavata Purana

The credit goes to Vyasa for the authorship of eighteen Puranas including Bhagavata Purana. These Puranas have references to Saranagati. They contain mythological episodes presented in the form of poetry. They teach us cosmogony, social order and also Saranagati. Though they combine Saranagati with popular beliefs, they do not aim at any systematic development of thought. I am narrating below the importance of Saranagati preached by Dhratarashtra, Prahlada, Gajendra and Ambareesha, as stated in Bhagavata Purana.

Dhratarashtra's Saranagati

The story of Dhratarashtra can be taken to show a clear illustration of Saranagati. Dhratarashtra is said to have offered Saranagati firstly to Vidura and then to Supreme Lord on the advice of the later. This story is well written and summarized in his work by V.K. Ramanujachari. He said : Seeing that his brother Dhratarashtra's life was coming to a close, he (Vidura) addressed him as follows : "Get out quickly ... Bhagawan Kala (time) cannot be evaded by any means at any time ... How wonderful is the desire of people to live, you set fire to the residence of Pandavas, you administered poison to them, their wife was insulted in your presence and you deprived of their kingdom and wealth. What do you gain by the life which they have suffered you to live ? ... He is wise man, who having attained a body the means for teaching the true goal, abandons all desires and attachments and throws up his body without his relations knowing where he went and what became of him. He is the best of men who is disgusted with the world either of his own motion or under instruction from another,

who fixes his mind on Bhagawan and departs from home. Go to the north without your relations knowing it..." This speech of Vidura had the desired effect. Dhratarashtra cut his strong attachments and proceeded with his brother in the direction pointed out by him, followed by his faithful wife Gandhari²³. Here it may be noted that the act of repentance and Saranagati came to Dhrtarashtra only at the end of his life.

Prahlada's Saranagati

In the case of Prahlada, Saranagati is exhibited from his childhood. However, it is extremely opposite to Dhratarashtra's Saranagati that dawns on him at the end of life. Prahlada surmounts all the impediments set on him by his mere Saranagati and never revolts even once. He never resists the arrogant attempts of his father which not only become futile, but paves the way for more rigorous Saranagati. Ultimately, Prahalada brings Moksha to his arrogant father by effecting the appearance of Lord Narasimha. In the words of V.K. Ramanujachari: "Prahalada was without desire of any kind, he saw that the fruits sought by men in this world and in the next are not worth striving for; when any unwelcome things came, he felt no pain; his mind, the senses and Prana were ever under control, his conduct was exemplary. Though he was an Asura by birth, he was without the nature found in other Asuras. Even as a boy, he found no pleasure in his toys. Though he had a high birth, a fine person, wealth of every kind and great learning, he was without conceit. He regarded all things as himself, and wished their welfare. He bowed before the feet of worthy people like a servant, he loved helpless men like their parents, he was attached to men of equal age as if they were Bhagawan Himself; he was

considerate to Brahmanas and he ever kept his word. He found pleasure in Bhagawan by nature, His mind being ever fixed on Him, he appeared to the world like a fool, he did not know what was going on around him. Whatever he did, he ever thought of Bhagawan, whether he sat, went about, took his food or quenched his thirst lay down or spoke. He was not aware of these actions. Thinking of Bhagawan, he would sometimes weep, sometimes he would laugh, he would sing aloud, he would dance without being ashamed, he would imitate Bhagawan's deeds, sometimes' he would remain silent with his hair standing on end and with eyes closed and tears falling down therefrom. Poets do not sing the praises of anyone, as they sing the praises of Prahalada even now. Even enemies sing his praises, and he is held up as an example of all men"²⁴. This shows Prahalada became a Prapanna by doing Saranagati as a Sadhana for attaining Moksha.

Gajendra (king elephant) and Saranagati

The Saranagati - Sadhana is instrumental in attaining God realization. But it requires a total absence of the feeling of ego or 'I'. This fact could be illustrated by the story of Gajendra's Moksha in Potana Bhagavatam (in Telugu language).

Gajendra, the king elephant was swimming in a lake. It was caught by a giant crocodile suddenly. However hard he tried, Gajendra became unable to free himself from the clutches of the crocodile. Gajendra totally tired and helpless. Ultimately surrendered himself to the Lord Vishnu pleading for protection, day and night Gajendra prayed for Divine intervention. The crocodile's hold was torturing and intolerable. Ultimately Gajendra

made Saranagati with his body and soul and offered the following prayer :

శా॥ లావొక్కింతయు లేదు, ధైర్యము విలోలంబయ్యె, బ్రాణంబులున్
రావుల్ తప్పెను, మూర్చవచ్చె, దనువున్ డస్సెన్, శ్రమంబయ్యెడిన్
నీవే తప్ప నితః పరం బెఱుగ, మన్నింపం దగున్ దీనునిన్,
రావే యీశ్వర, కావవే వరద, సంరక్షించు భద్రాత్మకా.

Lavokkintayu ledu, dhairyamu vilolamubayye, pranambulun.
Thavul dappemu, murchcha vachche, tanuvun dassen
sramambayyedin

Nivetappa nitah paramberuga, mannimpandagun dinunin
Rave isvara kavave Varada samrakshinchu bhadratmaka.

which means – “strength spent out and courage collapse O Varada! and my life lingers in my throat. All senses lost and physique fatigued beyond hope. No other protector than You. O Saviour come and free me, Rescuer of the distressed from this enemy’s hold and fortune and Anjuish”.²⁵

The way in which the Lord Vishnu went to save Gajendra was beautifully depicted by Potana in the following manner :

మ॥ సిరికిం జెప్పడు శంఖ చక్రయుగముం జేదోయి సందింపడే
పరివారంబును జీరడభ్రగపతిం మన్నింప డాక్కర్ణికాం
తర ధమ్మిల్లము జక్కనొత్తగిడు వివాదప్రోద్ధత శ్రీకుచో
పరిచేలాంచలమైనను వీడడు గజప్రాణోప నోత్సాహియై.

Sirikin jeppadu sankha chakra yugamun jedoyi sandhinpade
Parivarambunu jiradabragapatin manninpada karnikan
Tara dhammillamu jakka nottadu vivada proddhata sri Kucho
Parice lanchala mainanu vidadu gaja pranovanotsahiyai.

At that time Lord Vishnu was with Sri Lakshmi in Vaikunta. When Gajendra's prayer from earth fell on the ears of Vishnu, he instantly stood up with a Chakra and fled to rescue Gajendra without even informing Lakshmi where he was going, and not even adjusting back mantle frills of Lakshmi's sari that came upon his shoulders. Such was Vishnu's hurry and anxiety to rescue his devotee (Gajendra) in distress.²⁶

This story of Gajendra is a clear representation of Potana's notion of Saranagati. He wrote Bhagavatam in Telugu skilfully, poetically and depicts his beliefs and Saranagati. Without Saranagati touch it would be humanly impossible to make such a superb and magical impact in the episode of Gajendra. After killing the Makari [the crocodile] Lord Vishnu comes to the elephant who had swooned in the lake, pats him affectionately accepted his lotus flowers and blesses him. Such was the Gajendra's Saranagati to Lord Vishnu.

Ambareesha's Saranagati

Another example for tracing the doctrine of Saranagati is the story of Ambarisha. This story of Ambareesha's Saranagati can be shown. The story narrates that the sage Durvasa was invited by King Ambareesha to have lunch one day. Durvasa agrees and goes to river Kalindi for a holy bath as it was Dwadasi day. He took bath in the river and came late. The King having waited for long time, worried as it was nearing time to take Paranam on Dwadasi day to follow the procedure, the King just taken the holy water of the deity. The sage then returns and gets annoyed at the insult heaped on him. The angry sage creates Kritya (the killer devil) and orders it to devour the king. The king finding himself in

this helpless situation, who is also a devotee of Lord Vishnu, invoked Him with utmost surrender to save him from Kritya. Lord Vishnu, in reply to the prayer, sent His Chakra to rescue Ambareesha. The Chakra kills Kritya and chases the sage Durvasa also. Durvasa seeks Brahma's help. Brahma pleads his inability and advises the sage to seek Vishnu's help saying that He (Vishnu) alone can withdraw the Chakra and none else. Durvasa pleaded to Vishnu who recalled his Chakra and taught him how a sage should behave. In this context Lord Vishnu tells :

ఆ॥ నాకు మేలు గోరు నాభక్తుడగువాడు
భక్తజనుల కేన పరమగతియు
భక్తుడెందు జనిన బఱతెంచు వెనువెంట
గోవు వెంట దగులు కోడె భంగి.

*Naku melugoru nabhaktudagu vadu
bhakta janula kena parama gatiyu
bhaktudendu janina baratentu venuventa
govu venta dagulu kode bhang*

Which means "My wellwishers are my devotees and unto them I am final salvation, wherever my devotees go there, like a calf behind its mother, I go".²⁷ In the above stanza, the power of Saranagati is illustrated by showing that God Himself is a follower of his devotees.

Saranagati in Sri Ramayana

Ramayana is called as the golden bed-rock for Saranagati-Vidya. It is an explanation and narration of one of the thirty two Brahma Vidyas namely Nyasa Vidya or Saranagati. It can be perceived from the two perspectives namely Siddhopaya or the

God as the Ultimate goal of realization and Sadhyopaya or Saranagati as a means of taking refuge in the Lord. In Ramayana, the Siddhopaya aspect of Lord Rama is asserted to prove as the Supreme Brahma. Rama, however conceals His identity as Lord Narayana and convinces others that He is an ordinary human being, though His real nature is asserted by the Gods including Brahma after the death of Ravana. Brahma declares :

*Bhavan narayano devah sriman cakrayudho vibhuh,
eka srngo varahastvam bhuta bhavya sampatnajit.
aksaram brahma satyam tvam ca madhye chante ca raghava,
lokanam tvam paro dharmo visvak-senaocaturbujah.
snaragadhanva hrsikesah purusah purushottamah,
sarnyam saranam ca tvamahurdivya maharsayah,
sita lakshmah bhavan vishnuh.*

which means “You are the Lord Narayana with Sri the discweaponed and all pervading. You did Varaha Avatara and conqueror of all the enemies in the past and in future. You are the indestructable and truthful Brahman Oh ! Raghava. You are in the middle and the end of the worlds. You are the supreme supporter of the worlds. You are the four armed Visvak-sena. You are the Lord of senses. You are the Being and Supreme Being. The Divine Sages declare that you are the refugee and refuge. Sita is Goddess Lakshmi and you are Lord Vishnu”²⁸

Tara, wife of Vali says of Rama :

*Nivasavrikkah sadhunam apannanam para gatih |
artanam samsarayacaiva yasasas caikabhajanam ||*

“You are the abode for noble, like a tree for the birds. You are the only protection for the people in distress; You are the refuge of all the trouble people; You are the only repository of the fame”.²⁹

Vibhisana remarks :

“*Sarvaloka saranyaya raghavaya mahatmane*”. which means Saranya – Raghava is the refugee to those living souls and creatures in seven worlds like Bhuhu, Bhuvaha, Suvaha, Mahaha, Janaha, Tapaha, Satyam and seven worlds like Athala, Vithala, Suthala, Tarathala, Rasathala, Mahathala and Pathala existing down the earth.³⁰

Eventhough Rama had killed Ravana, his wife, Mandodari remarks of him :

*Vyaktam esha mhayogi paramatma sanatanah |
anadhimadhyanidhanh mahatah paramo mahan ||
manusain vapurasthaya visnuh satyaprakramah.*

which means “You are the great Sage manifested; You are the Supreme Being, the very ancient one; You are the greatest of the great”.³¹

All the above narrations no doubt show that the Ramayana is an Upabrahmana of the Vedas and Rama is the Siddhyopaya or the self accomplished Divinity. The Saranagati - Vidya is well narrated and expounded in all the Kandas of Ramayana. In Balakanda, the Saranagati of the Gods to Lord Vishnu in the ocean is observed. In Ayodhyakanda, Bharata made Saranagati in Citrakuta. In Aranyakanda the Sages surrender to Rama when demons harassed. In Kiskindhakanda, Sugriva seeks refuge in Rama, who promises to redeem Sugriva’s wife from Vali and also the lost kingdom. In the Sundarakanda it is shown that the ‘Trijata’ instigating the Rakshasa ladies to surrender to Sita. In the Yuddhakanda it is quite known that Vibhishana belonging to the

opposite camp and a brother of Ravana surrenders before Rama with four of his followers.³² It is seen that Lord Rama as Siddhopaya granted the request of all those who surrendered and fulfilled their desires.

It is depicted in Ramayana that Kakasura (Indra's son in a crow form) committed a blunder by physically hurting and injuring Sita. This enraged Rama attacked Kakasura with a simple grass and ultimately fell at Rama's feet helplessly. The crow's father Indra abandoned his son as he could not interfere in the matter against the arrow of Rama. In the same way Kakasura wandered all the worlds and at last surrendered before Rama who is the protector. Sita who was by Rama's side just turned the crow's head down to Rama's feet as an act of surrender to Rama by the crow. This act of Sita is mentioned in Padmapurana only. This was narrated as symbol by Sita to Hanuman when he met Her in Asokavana; Valmiki lucidly narrates this in the following slokas :

*Sa pitra ca parityahtah suraisca samaharscbhih,
trin lokan samparikramya tamova saranam gatah.
satam nipatitam bhumah sapranyah saranagatim,
vadhirmepi kakutstah krupaya paryapalayt.* It means -

“That Kakasura, having been disowned by his father the Gods and the Sages, wandered all the three worlds and took refuge in Rama. Kakasura deserves death but protected because he took refuge in Rama and fell on the ground before Him”.³³

But Lord Rama made blind one of the eyes of Kakasura as a measure to thwart its further wickedness and violence. From the above instances, it is observed that Saranagati is extremely powerful which prevails the whole of Ramayana from the beginning to the end.

Angas or Pre-Conditions of Saranagati traced in Sri Ramayana

The five Angas of Prapatti or Saranagati namely Anukulyasamkalpa, Pratikulyavarjanam, Mahavisvasa, Gopratvarnam and Karpunya, should be practiced along with Angi namely Atmaniksepa. The Atmaniksepa is nothing but Saranagati. These five Angas of Saranagati abundantly found in Ramayana. Hence Ramayana is admitted as a textbook of practical religion and regarded as Saranagati Veda, in which, the Vibhishana's Saranagati to Rama is regarded as the Upanishad part, filled in itself the essence of Ramayana.

The surrender of Vibhishana illustrates this fact. Vibhishana's Saranagati is a favourite topic for scholars especially to the Sri Vaishnava philosophy. He is a supreme example for Saranagati, who sought refuge in Rama, rebelling against the authority of his brother, who symbolised evil for him. Vibhishana's Saranagati contains all the Angas and Angi of Saranagati. In the words of Surpanaka, it is said, "*Vibhisnastu dharmatma na thu rakshasaceshtitaha*". It means Vibhishana is Dharmatma and he is one free from the wicked deeds of Raksasas.³⁴ Such a Dharmatma requested his brother Ravana to give back Sita and free from all anxiety. He expressed this in quite a number of times. The original sloka states :

*Pradiyatam dasarathya Maithili, Sitam ca ramaya nivedya
devim, vasema rajanneha vitasokah*

This is an illustration of the first Anga namely, Anukulyasamkalpa.³⁵

Ravana's refusal to heed to Vibhishana's advice and the latter's subsequent abandonment of Ravana when he rebukes Vibhishana can be interpreted as the avoidance of evils i.e., Pratikulyavarjanam. This is further elaborated by his rejection of all the possessions including his sons, wife, friends etc. The very abandonment of Lanka shows this Anga in the following lines "Tyaktva putramaca darmaca raghavam saranam gatah". which means 'he took refuge in Rama having forsaken his wife and children'.³⁶

The third Anga namely Karpanya or helplessness is traced in the following utterances of Vibhishana when he introduced himself to Sugriva and others.

*Anujo ravana syahham tena casmyavamanitah,
bhavantam sarva bhutanam sarnya saranam gata.
parityahita maya lanka mitrani ca dhanani ca,
bhavadgatam me rajyaam ca jivitam ca sukhanica.*

It means -

"I am the brother of Ravana. I have been humiliated by him and I take refuge in You, the refuge of all beings. My riches, my friends and Lanka have been abandoned by me".³⁷

The fourth Anga, namely Mahavisvasa is indicated in the following verse of Vibhishana,

*Sarvalokesarnyaya raghavaya mahatmane.*³⁸

Vibhishana's faith in Rama is firm and steadfast is shown by the characterization of Vibhishana as one, who possesses great wisdom. "*Vibhishano mahaprajnah*".

The fifth Anga Goptratvavarnam consists in Vibhishana's prayer for protection is expressed in the words, "Raghavam Saranam Gatah".

The Angi, Atmaniksepa or surrender of the Self is expressed in “*Nivedhyat mam kshipram Vibhishanamupasthitam*” or ‘offer me, Vibhishana to him at once’. In the presence of Angas, the Angi, Atmaniksepa becomes whole. Though the chief of the camp advises Rama adversely, He announces His readiness to protect even Ravana, if he surrenders for protection. Further, Lord Rama declares that He is ready to admit into His fold even one who poses himself to be friendly and assures that He would not forget him even though there are defects in him. He states :

*Mitrabhavena sampraptam na tyajeyam katamcana |
dosho yadyapi tasya syat satameta dagarhitam ||*

it means “I will never give up anybody who approaches Me with friendly attitude even if he is full of defects. This is the way of noble people”.³⁹

Thus from the Vibhishana’s episode it is noted that his surrender besides bringing the protection from evils of his brother secured the lost Kingdom (Lanka). Hence it is concluded that in Ramayana there are number of incidents where Saranagati played a useful role. This may be the reason that Ramayana is otherwise called as a golden bed-rock for Saranagati-Vidya.

Saranagati in the Bhagavad Gita

Bhagavad Gita is the Lord’s own utterances in the battle field of Kurukshetra to Arjuna. Hence it has the highest reverence and proper source of guidance for attaining Moksha. In fact there is nothing more to ask, for because the concept of Saranagati is demonstrated by the Lord Krishna himself. The speciality of Bhagavad Gita is that it evokes our faith and attention on looking Arjuna’s total Saranagati to Lord Krishna.

The Bhagavad Gita shows the different Sadhanas for attaining Moksha. It is the repository of Sadhanas such as Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Saranagati which are the Sadhanas exemplified in Srivaishnavism. Gita's main teaching is the practice of Nishkamakarma or 'doing of one's duties without aspiring any results'. Only in such a state of mind, the Jnana or knowledge will emerge.

Lord Krishna's teachings in Gita have great ethical importance rather than metaphysical significance. The gist of the Gita is that God is the exemplar of all virtues. All living beings find their existence in Him only. He is the Sutradari or prime mover and the two Tatvas. Purusa and Prakriti are intertwined with God. It teaches that God is the supporter or Adhara, the controller or Niyanta, whole or Sesi, time or Kala, originator or Srshtikara, protector or Rakshaka and destroyer or Layakaraka of this world.

Bhagavad Gita attaches equal importance to Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and to Saranagati. The inter-relation of the four Sadhanas is expounded as follows: "It seems to be meant in the Gita, that it is a progressive advancement to pass on from the discipline of Karma to that of Jnana, and from this again to the discipline of Bhakti and Prapatti, because he, who uses this last discipline to regulate and control his life, is guided by a still wider and more comprehensive vision of truth than that which is commanded ultimately by the Jana yogin".⁴⁰

The first Mantra of the Isopanishad states that Bhakti and Saranagati are the best Sadhanas for overcoming selfishness and points out that through Saranagati (if not Bhakti) the soul gains freedom from Karma and attains the abode of God namely, heaven

by the emancipated soul of God, which is its natal home and destined goal”.⁴¹

Now, coming to considering the Gita in brief to trace the concept of Saranagati which starts with the Arjuna's appeal to Lord Krishna : “Tell me conclusively that which is wholesome for me, who am come to for refuge as your pupil”. This shows Arjuna's helplessness as well his submission at the lotus feet of the Lord Krishna. This is in keeping with the opinion of Yamunacharya who in his Githarathasamgraha says as follows :

“This means an enquiry that is made to show that a proposed work is needed. For Arjuna- the author wished to teach the Sastra, as it had been practically lost to the world ... and He needed only an excuse in the Prapatti made by Arjuna”.⁴²

Saranagati is referred to in relation to Karmayoga in the tenth and eleventh Sloka of fourth Adhyaya. The original Sloka says :

*Vitaragabhayakrodha manmaya mamupasritah |
bhavo Jnanatapasa puta madbhavamagatah. ||*

It means, “freedom from attachment, fear and anger, absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, purified by the austerity of wisdom, many have come to My Being”.⁴³ Sankara in his Bhasya makes Prapatti synonymous with devotion to Jnana and suggests in the eleventh stanza that any form of devotion as an exercise of affection is compatible with delution, Jnana is the only way. For Visistadvaitins that devotion to Lord Vishnu alone is the supreme devotion and devotion to other deities would be blessed relatively less and Saranagati too can be shown only to Lord Vishnu who is the Supreme Lord. No sinner, no matter, how wrong his past life may have been is beyond redemption, the Lord takes a special delight

in granting pardon to those who have sinned the most.⁴⁴ This is being narrated in thirty sixth Sloka of the fourth Adhyaya, which also reflects in Ramanuja's Saranagati Gadya. Further it is observed that the cause for all sins are selfishness and once man is able to overcome his selfish desires he becomes an emancipated soul which deserves to enjoy all the high and heavenly privileges of eternity. The Self enlightenment and realization of God offers man deliverance of worldly ties and not Bhakti as such but Bhakti is instrumental in achieving self enlightenment and realization of God. In the same fourth Adhyaya Lord Krishna proclaims that :

*Sreyandravyamayadyajnanajjnanayajnah parantapa |
sarvam Karmakhilam partha jnane parisamapyate ||*

which means - Knowledge as a sacrifice is greater than any material sacrifice, O scourge of the foe (Arjuna), for all works without any exception culminates in wisdom.⁴⁵

The basis for the doctrine of Kaikarya is explained in the ninth verse of sixth Adhyaya. According to Pillai Lokacharya, Prapatti is defined as stoical steadiness of the mind of the Yogin. Apart from this, he also seeks the selfless service of his fellow Prapannas, and by this expresses the love of God that is operating in him. The point that has to be emphasised therefore is that all Jivas are embodiment of God and the best way of serving God is by serving the Jivas in whom Lord resides. Prapatti cannot possibly be separated from altruism. This shows that Saranagati is capable of leading the aspirant to the highest goal.

As a matter of fact, the central idea of Saranagati doctrine is present in the following Gita passages. The original text runs :

*Ye Yathe mam pradyante tamstathaiva bhajamyaham ।
mama vartmanuvartante manusyah parth sarvasah ॥*

which means “Arjuna, however men seek Me; even so do I approach them; for all men follow my path in every way”.⁴⁶ In seventh Adhaya Lord Krishna proclaims that :

*Daivi hyesa gunamayi mama maya duratyaya ।
mameva ye prapadyante mayametam taranti te ॥*

It means “for this most wonderful Maya (Veil) of Mine, consisting of the three Gunas (modes of Nature), is extremely difficult to break through; those, however, who constantly adore Me alone are able to cross it”.⁴⁷ In the above Slokas the syllables ‘Mam prapadyante’ and ‘Mameva ye prapadynte’ shows the theme of Saranagati. In the same seventh Adhyaya the Gita declares, in unmistakable terms, the significance of Saranagati as a means to Moksha. The text says :

*Na mam duskrutino mudhah prapadyante naradhamaha ।
mayayapahrtajnana asuram bhavamasritaha ॥*

It means “Those whose wisdom has been carried away by Maya, and who have embraced the demoniac nature, such foolish and vile men of evil deeds do not adore Me”.⁴⁸

In the eighteenth chapter of Gita, Lord Krishna tells the individual souls as follows:

“Now that you have developed your character, strength, your individuality based on your human context of society and its interaction, I whisper gently to you, Renounce and surrender all that developed ego to Me, the one Divine self that dwells in all

men in all nature, that renunciation will be genuine that surrender will also be supreme victory, for there is something worthwhile to surrender and that surrender is the Highest and best in man and nature, the immortal and infinite Reality behind the mortal and the finite”.⁴⁹

The above passage describes the Saranagati tradition. Basing on this, in the following Slokas, where Lord Krishna underlined the importance of Saranagati. They are :

*Api cetsuduracaro bhajate mamananyabhak |
sadhureva sa mantavyah samyagvyavasito hi sah ||*

It means “Even if a man of the most evil conduct, worship Me with undistracted devotion, he must be reckoned as righteous for he has rightly resolved”.⁵⁰

Herein Lord Krishna says the great Charamasloka :

*Sarvadharmanparityajya mamekam saranam vraja |
aham tva sarvapapebhyo moksayisayami ma sucaha ||*

It tells that “Resigning all your duties to me, the all powerful and all supporting Lord, take refuge in Me alone, I shall absolve you of all sins, worry not”.⁵¹

Again Lord Krishna says :

*Tameva saranam gaccha sarvabhavena bharata |
tatprasadatparam santim sthanam prapsyasi sasvatam ||*

It means “Take shelter in Him alone with all your being, Arjuna. By His mere grace you shall attain supreme peace and the eternal state”.⁵²

Further Lord Krishna says :

*Ye tu sarvani karmani mayi samnyasya matparaha |
ananyenaiva yogena mam dhyayanta upasate ||
tesamaham samuddharta mrtyusamsarasagarat |
bhavami naciratpartha mayyavesitacetasam ||*

It means - “Those who depend exclusively on Me, and surrendering all action to Me, worship Me (God with attributes), constantly meditation on Me with single minded devotion. These Arjuna, I speedily deliver from ocean of birth and death, their mind being fixed on Me”.⁵³

The above Slokas point out that the significant feature of Saranagati is the attainment of God-head. The point of emphasis is that one should surrender at the feet of the Lord in order to attain the highest reality. An aspirant who do not have the capacity to adopt other Sadhanas such as Karmayoga, Jnanayoga etc. can adopt this Sadhana namely, Saranagati. God is all loving, true friend and unaccountably compassionate. Hence any aspirant who does not have a knowledge of other Sadhanas, the only alternative is to surrender to the Lord. As Lord Krishna himself says :

*Mam hi partha vyapasritya ye pi syuh papayonayah |
striyo vaisyastatha sudrastepi yanti param gatim ||*

It tells that – “The way, those who take refuge in Him, though they are born as low caste women, Vaisyas, as well as Sudras, they also attain the Highest goal (Moksha)”.⁵⁴

Thus, it becomes clear that one must seek the protection of God in every way, then only He can redeem us through His

encompassing love and compassion. ‘Seeking the protection of God in every way’ is explained by Lord Krishna in Gita thus :

*Manmana bhava madbhakto madyaji mam namaskuru ।
mamevaisaysi yuktvaivamatmanam matparayanah ॥*

It means - “It means fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me and make obeisance to Me; thus linking yourself with Me and entirely depending on Me, you shall come to Me”.⁵⁵

Here Lord Krishna describes the four ways through which the individual soul can seek God’s protection. The four aspects of the Jiva namely mind, reason, senses and the body should be under control. The word ‘Fix your mind on Me’ describes that one must have unstinted devotion with the above said four aspects while seeking the God’s protection.

By saying ‘be devoted to Me’ God tells us to direct our reasoning towards Him.

In the words ‘Offer worship to Me’ the Lord tells that devotion must aim at Him after knowing the truth that He is the enjoyer of all sacrificial performances and other duties. In this context, Gita says:

*Ahamatma gudakesa sarvabhutasayasthitaha ।
ahamadisca madhyam ca bhutanamanta eva ca ॥*

It means - “Arjuna, I am the universal self seated in the heart of all beings; so I alone, the beginning and middle and also the end of all beings”.⁵⁶

The saying ‘make obeisance to Me’ means one should surrender everything including his Bhara, Phala and Svarupa. In

other words it implies that one should have complete devotion to God and none other. Lord Krishna speaks about complete devotion in the following way :

*Bhaktya tvananyaya sakya ahamevamvidhorjuna ।
Jnatum drastum ca tattvena pravestum ca parantapa ॥*

It tells that - “Through single minded devotion, however, I can be seen in this form (with four arms) and known in essence and even entered into O valiant Arjuna”.⁵⁷

Again to Arjuna Lord Krishna proclaims,

*Matkarmakrmatparamo madbhaktah sangavarjitah ।
nirvairah sarvabhutesu yah sa mameti pandava ॥*

It means - “Arjuna, he who performs all his duties for My sake, depends on Me, is devoted to Me; has no attachment and is free from malice towards all beings, reaches Me”.⁵⁸

In the above two Slokas, Lord Krishna tells that self surrender is the prime component of devotion and the devotee is exclusively dependent on the God. So it can be concluded that complete surrender and complete devotion are one and the same. Thus, the Bhagavad Gita explains clearly the meaning of Saranagati which is a sole means for Moksha. Hence the concept of Saranagati is well incorporated in Bhagavad Gita.

Alvars and Saranagati

In the Bhagavata Puranam, (XI.5.38-40) it is said that the great devotees of Lord Vishnu will appear in South India on the banks of Tamraparni, Krtamala (Vaigai), Payasvini (Palar), Kaveri and Mahanadi (Periyar).⁵⁹ The word ‘Alvar’ means ‘one who

has deep intuitive knowledge of God' and one who is immersed in the contemplation of God. The works of Alvars are full of intense and devoted love for Lord Vishnu. This love is the foundation for the later systematic doctrine of Saranagati. Alvars were twelve in number and they belonged to different castes, and one among them was of the Panar caste and Andal was a woman. As the name itself implies, the Alvars were expert divers in divinity and were deeply immersed in love of God. Their poetic utterances were spontaneous, out pourings of their intuitional experience of the Lord, especially in the easily accessible form of permanent incarnations or idols or Arca. They were born mystics, unlike the later Acharyas who acquired their insight by the laborious process of self-purification and contemplation.⁶⁰ Their works were anthologized and known as Nalayara Divya Prabhandham. This Prabhandham helps for the later Sri Vaishnava Acharyas to make a systematic formulation of the concept of Saranagati and they made a profound influence on all Acharyas of the Sri Vaisnava Sampradaya. The works of Alvars are sacred and for this reason they are called as Dravida Veda. The works of Alvars are otherwise called Dravidopanishad. The spiritual experience of the Alvars, the mysticism, is enshrined in the Tamil Veda, the Dravidopanishad. The Prabandam contains mystic wisdom of Saranagati.

In Srivachana Bhushana, it is said that Alvars did Saranagati in different places in Archavatara only.⁶¹ All their works are a narration of their individual experience of love, devotion and Saranagati to God. In other words, they are God-intoxicated saints. Their approach of God is filled with feelings, emotions and surrender. They sang songs in an inspired manner and often believed that they themselves had no hand in their composition, but it was

God who spoke through them. Their songs were often sung to the accompaniment of symbols, and intoxicating melody of the music was peculiar to the Alvars and entirely different from the traditional music then current in South India.⁶² Their experiences of God are comparable with the parents love with their children and a woman's love with her beloved. Their only desire is to become unison with God. The aspect of total surrender and clinging to God are the dominant features of their spiritual life. Such experience is possible only through revelation. This experience is otherwise called Sakshthkaranubhava. They lived in the worship of God and enjoyed in the company of God. Their mystic experience is a direct and immediate love of God. Ramanuja was greatly influenced by this mystic experience both in life and in his works. The unstinted Bhakti and Saranagati are witnessed in the lives of Alvars. The Bhakti and Saranagati movements in India owes its origin to Alvars. Their philosophy played an important role in shaping of the religious life of the people of the South India. They are twelve in number. Poigai, Bhutatalvar, Peyalvar, Tirumazhisai, Nammalvar, Kulasekharalvar, Periyalvar, Tondaradippodai, Tiruppanalvar, Tirumangai, Andal and Madhurakavi.

Mudal Alvars - Poigai, Bhutattar, Peyalvars and Saranagti

The consequences of practicing Bhakti and Saranagati can be illustrated from the episode of the earliest Alvars namely Poigai, Bhutattar and Pey. There is an interesting incident happened in the lives of these three Alvars. Once these three Alvars were independently not knowing each other living in forests, moving from place to place. A big storm broke out and all three were forced to

be under one common roof for a shelter one after another in Tirukkovilur. The shelter which was given by Mruganda Rishi was so small that could not accommodate even one person. But three of them who came one by one stood and waited for the rain and storm to stop. At that time they were huddled together and felt the presence of a fourth person, although he was not seen and that unseen person they concluded to be none other than God with Lakshmi came there to reveal Himself to those three Alvars. Poigai Alvar realised the God with the path of intuitive knowledge or Para-Bhakti, Bhutattar realised God with the path of intensive devotion or Para Jnana and Peyalvar realised God with the path of intuitive transcendental devotion or Paramabhakti. Thus these three Alvars have shown different ways of worshipping at the lotus feet of the Lord, by composing three Prabandhams i.e., Mudal Tiruvandadhi, Irandam Tiruvandadhi and Mundram Tiruvandadhi respectively.

Poigai Alvar praises God in his Prabandham: "O mind meditate on the Lord, the Supreme Being Uttama Purusha and that He protects us that He resides in the minds of the meditators, that He is lying on milky ocean, that He resides in Venkadam; that He is all pervading in the hearts".⁶³ While showing the importance of Saranagati Poigai Alvar says that one can dispel Karmas, diseases and sins by self-surrender to the Lord Rama who destroyed Lanka at one time by his arrow."⁶⁴

Bhutattalvar describes the experience of Bhakti in the first verse of his Prabandham :

"Bhakti as a lamp bowl, aspirations as ghee, the mind that has melted out as the wick, the melting soul have I lighted the bright

flame of devotion to Narayana revealed in the Tamil language”.⁶⁵ Bhutattalvar again cites the incident of Gajendra who did Saranagati at the before fading away of Lord Sriman Narayana for submitting the lotus flowers at the feet and not for protection from the Crocodile; In this hymn, he has shown the Saranagati.⁶⁶ This is an illustrious example for Anukulyasamkalpa, the first Anga of Sarangati.

Peyalvar narrates his experiences of God in his Prabandham as follows : “By seeing God, I have destroyed my increasing sins”⁶⁷ and in the other verse, “God is the medicine to our hell existence”.⁶⁸ He also enumerated the theme of Saranagati in the following verse:

“Questioning not whether good or bad, seek thou the beautiful feet of Lord on whose chest is worn the fragrant honey laden Thulasi. All thy sins will immediately vanish.”⁶⁹ This shows the Mahavisvasa another important Anga of Saranagati.

Tirumazhisai Alvar and Saranagati

Tirumazhisai Alvar was an Amsa of Chakratalvar. He revealed that he knew God thoroughly well. He composed two Prabandhams. They are : Nanmukhan Tiruvandadhi and Tiruccanda Viruttam. He propagates the idea that God will protect the good and punish evils. God is the repository of love and beauty. Human existence is dependent completely on the Divine mercy. The important aim of Jiva is the attainment of permanent release from the clutches of Samsara through Saranagati only. The only way to Moksha is through the Absolute and un-conditional self-surrender to the Lord. He says:

“No mental suffering will visit one if one accepts Madhusudan as the sole refuge, for God is man’s wealth”.⁷⁰

Tirumazihisai Alvar advises to the worrying mind to surrender at the lotus feet of the Lord. He says :

“O Good mine, Hast thou not seen the Supreme Being?

Is He not always present thee? Know though that the unequalled Lord is the protector of me and of those like me”⁷¹

About himself he says :

“I have made surrender of my vocation, my whole time is taken up with the praise of the Lord.”⁷² In one of the hymn, he narrates the origin of Saranagati as preached by Siva to four seers as follows:

“Rudra of right austerity taught the four seers (Agastya, Pulastya, Daksha and Markandeya) under the shade of the banyan tree in the previous aeon the way of Surrender to the Lord who measured the world and is reposing in the ocean (viz. Narayana)”.⁷³

According to him, an individual effort to attain Moksha is only secondary because God’s mercy is flowing and it does not wait for individual’s effort to grant boons. These are the elements of Siddhyopaya and Sadhyopaya which are an important parts of Saranagati.

Kulasekhara Alvar and Saranagati

For the first time in the works of Kulasekhara Alvar the elements of Saranagati are found. According to him, the path of

Saranagati involves five Angas and one Angi. They are Anukulyasamkalpam, Pratikulyasayavarjanam, Mahavisvasam, Goptratvavarnam, Karpanyam and Atmaniksepa. The first five are Angas and last one is Angi which is nothing but Saranagati.

The first Anga of Saranagati is propagated in the form of Anukulyasamkalpa. It involves in identifying the devotees as representatives of God and serving Him with utmost respect. According to Periyavachchan Pillai, Anukulya means that one who is lovable to God; as well as lovable to Bhagavatas. the first decad of Perumal Tirumozhi speaks about the interest created in the matter of love towards God; and the second decad speaks about the interest created in the matter of love towards Bhagavatas.^{73(a)} The second Anga namely, partikulyasyavarjanam is not indulging in any activity which might displease the will of God. Kulasekhara in his Perumal Tirumozhi third decad of hymns speaks about the renunciation of the company of the sinful and seeks the company of good which is nothing but a second condition of Saranagati namely, Pratikalyasyavarjanam. In this context he says "I shall not join those who have love for their bodies; I shall not move with those who are unable to leave the contemplation of delicate waisted women; I shall not join those who are cupid-like; I shall not join those who seek food and clothing and seek to live on this world; with those who seek low pleasures I shall not join. On the other hand I shall set my mind on the Lord and become absorbed in devotion".⁷⁴ Karpanya or helplessness is another essential anga of Saranagati which is capable of invoking Lord's mercy. This Anga or Karpanya is shown by Kulasekhara in his Perumal Tirumozhi as follows:

“I am like a baby which weeps, yet thinks of the mother’s grace, though with anger fierce she has thrust it from her face. Even like a born girl who knows only her husband knows, though deeds such as men may mock her lover does, so will I sing, though thou will not be my Lord, thy anklets tingling ... like a great bird (on a ship) am I which goes around and sees no shore and comes atlast back over the tossing sea and perches on the ship’s most, returning to the Lord’s feet”.⁷⁵ Again he says : ‘Though the bad people, world-interested persons, call me mad, they are to me mad men’.

The Anga of Mahavisvasa is revealed by Kulasekhara is that : God is as mother to a baby, as a husband to his wife, as a physician to his patient, as a ships mast to the bird in mid-ocean. He saw Lord Sri Rama in everything and everywhere and considered that the constant chanting the very name of this “great repository” would make the vast ocean of the life-cycle a mere puddle.

The greatness Kulasekhara lies in his supreme faith and “longing towards Lord Ranganatha by beholding Him, singing in His praise, offering flowers at His feet, folding palms, prostrating before Him and roll down around Him in great delight”⁷⁶ Kulasekhara Alvar prays for the grace of Lord Venkateswara of Tirumala Hills. He wishes to be a bird, a fish, a bearer of the spittoon, a step on which tread the servants of the Godhead when they enter the sanctim sanctorium of the deity (IV.8) This reveals his ardent desire to be nearer to God in every sense, and it is an expression of his devotion (IV.5 and 6). He also seeks the gift of uninterrupted meditation like the continual flow of streams of the Hills. The

achievement of a complete steadfastness and passivity resembling even a stone-like inconscience along with a dedicated interior solely to the Divine Lord of all creation, is a remarkable one.⁷⁷

Nammalvar and Saranagati

Nammalvar was a mystic philosopher born at Kurukur, now in Tirunelvely district of Tamilnadu. He spent his early life in realizing the God through intense love. It is known as Divine love stage, He tries to establish a sacred union with God through absolute self-surrender. Nammalvar who is rightly claimed as the Prapanna Jana Kutastha, has performed Saranagati and shown the world its importance as a means to Moksha.⁷⁸ For this he eradicates all his desires and evils. His works are Tiru viruttum, Tiruvasiriyam, Periya Tiruvandadi and Tiruvoymozhi. Nammalvar's whole life was sacrificed for meditation. His disciple Madhurakavi Alvar considers him as his Acharya. Prof. P.N. Srinivasachari says : "Nammalvar's mysticism is a perfect illustration of the best proof of God is the direct intuitive experience of God".⁷⁹ According to Nammalvar the path of self-surrender is one of the most early and most direct towards the attainment of the experience of God. It is the only ultimate path. There is no other path to God except through dedicated surrender. He says : "The abode of bliss that destroys all fatigue, the abode of knowledge that annuls all ignorance, the Lord of all Gods eternals who have conquered all sloth, His sorrow. Dispelling feet do though seek for refuge".⁸⁰

Finally, Nammalvar did Saranagati with Akinchanya, Ananyagatitva and Bhakti paravasya in three Divya Desas viz., Vanamamalai (5.7), Tirukkudandai (5.8), Tiruvallavazh (5.9), and at Milky Ocean (5.10) where Lord reclining posture on Adishesha respectively. Since there is no mention of Piratti, in those places,

Nammalvar's Saranagati was not materialised. So, he did finally poorna Saranagati at the lotus feet of Lord Venkateswara in Tiruvoymozhi 6th decad, 10th centum and 10th hymn. The original hymn runs as follows :

*Akalakillen iraiyum enru alarmel mankai urai marpa
Nikaril pukazhay ulakam munruutaiyay ennai alvane
nikarilamarar, munikkanankal virumpum Tiruvenkattane
pukal onru illa atiyen un atikkil amarntu pukuntene.*

It means - "Oh, Resident of Tiruvenkatam, reverently sought by the peerless Amarars

And sages in their bunches, on Your winsome chest in heres

The Divine Mother who from a flower emerged, every saying that From you she shall not for a moment apart;

Of incomparable glory, You are the Lord of all the three worlds, And at Your feet lovely, this vassal squarely takes refuge, with no other hold.⁸¹

Again he says :

"God is the protector of those who surrender at His feet"⁸² and adds, "Lord is nearer to those who bow to His feet".⁸³ "Bhagavan is the lover for those who seek His feet".⁸⁴ Nammalvar narrates his experiences of Saranagati when he made Saranagati at the feet of the deity at Tirumokur. In this context he says :

"There is no Moksha without making self-surrender to Kalamekam, an important deity at Tirumokur".⁸⁵ There is no other way than the lotus feet of the deity (Tirumokur) which only is the path of salvation".⁸⁶

Tondaradippodi Alvar and Saranagati

Tondaradippodi Alvar described in his work Tirumalai about the nature of sins and his Mukti due to everloving God and he says that at the time when he was a gambler and a thief and caught in the net of a woman's fish like eyes, was helpless, was it not the beauty of Srirangam who called him, entered into his mind and made him surrender to Him.⁸⁷

He realized his helplessness and dependence on God. He gives a deep rooted and heart burning narration about his helplessness in a hymn as follows :

“I have no place nor plot of ground nor relatives nor friends on this earth; I have not attained Thine lotus feet. O Supreme God! Oh luminous cloud-hued form, Kanna! I implore thee, Lord reside at Srirangam; Who else have I except thee to protect me”.⁸⁸ Earlier, he advised the devotees to do Saranagati at the feet of Lord Krishna who was a cowered boy in Krishnavatara now resplended in Adishesha as Ranganata in Srirangam.⁸⁹ Here he underlined the superiority of Saranagati on a particular Supreme deity i.e., Lord Ranganatha and other small deities will not protect devotees all the times.

Tirumangai Alvar and Saranagati

Tirumangai Alvar, who sung 1184 hymns on 84 Divya Desas, did Saranagati in several Divya Desas particularly in Tirumala. This Alvar did Saranagati by lowering himself and praying for redeeming of his previous karmas in the hymn ‘Taye tandai’ centum (1.9) of Periya Tirumozhi. Here he considered the Lord as mother, father and everything. Periyavachchan Pillai noted in his commentary for

this centum where in the hymn 1.9.9, Alvar prays 'Madavane which denotes that he did Saranagati through Purushakara of Piratti. In this particular centum, it is said that Alvar did Saranagati for 'Istaprappti'. In the next centum, (1.10.10) he prays for 'Anishtanivritti' i.e., eradication of sins.

Similarly Vishnucettar, Tiruppan Alvar, Andal (God Lakshmi) and Madhurakavi Alvar did Saranagati and reference find a place in their Prabandams. Thus the philosophy of Saranagati is richly reflected in Alvars hymns.

To conclude, Saranagati has a hoary origin in the Vedas. It is noticed in this context that the literature of Saranagati is also found in the Upanishads, the Bhāgavata purāṇam, Sri Ramayana and Bhagavat Gita. Saranagati has reached its apex in the life styles of Alvars'. Thus an attempt is made in the above pages to trace the historical development of Saranagati from the Vedas down to the Alvars hymns.

The post-Alvar Saranagati literature will be taken in the ensuing chapter.

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89. Ibid, Verse, 9.



ACHARYAS' SYSTEMATISATION OF SARANAGATI

The Alvars showed way to Acharyas who streamlined and taught the doctrine of Saranagati in detail. The Acharyas were inspired by Alvars who were the seers and lovers of God. There is a distinction between Alvars and Acharyas, the former were only inspired men the later had their inspirations modified by learning and scholarship.¹ While describing the Acharya's contribution to Saranagati Prof. P.N.Srinivasachari said : Ramanuja at the close of his career entrusted the spiritual care to the Visistadvaita community of seventy-four Simhasenadhipatis.² Sriman Nathamuni, Yamunacharya, Ramanuja, Vedanta Desika, Pillai Lokacharya and Manavala Mamuni are the stalwarts in Acharya-Parampara.

Sriman Nathamunigal and Sri Vaishnavism

A grand son of Iswara Bhattar in Veeranarayanapuram (Kattumannar Koil) Sriman Nathamunigal was born in 823 A.D. it was Sriman Nathamuni, who codified, consolidated the 4,000 hymns of Alvars and divided them into four parts, Mudalayiram, Periya Tirumozhi, Iyarpa and Tiruvoymozhi. He taught his two

nephews - Melaiagaththalwar and Keezhaiagaththalwar how to sing these hymns and ordered them to propagate and perpetuate them by visiting the holy shrines and singing them before the deities. The other two important disciples of Nathamuni are Uyyakkondar and Kurugaikaval Appan. He taught all Rahasyas and Prabanhams to these two disciples. He asked his two disciples to teach these works to his would-be born grandson - Yamunacharya, who would enrich the Vaishnavism in later years.

Sriman Nathamunigal wrote two important Sanskrit treatises Nvaya Tatva and Yogarahasya, which are, however, not available now. These two works very much influenced the later Acharyas like Yamuna, Ramanuja and in shaping the philosophy of Visistadvaita. It is said that Sriman Nathamuni's services to spread the Divya Prabandham may be compared to what Vyasa did for the understanding and population of Vedas.

This luminary is remembered with gratitude by all the Sri Vaishnavas because, but for his 'discovery' and propagation of the Tamil hymns of the Alwars, they would not have seen the light of the day.^{2(a)} Thus Nathamuni's works influenced later Acharyas like Uyyakkondar, Rama Misra, Yamunacharya, Ramanuja and others. Through these Acharyas the genesis and growth of Saranagati is flourished.

Yamunacharya and Saranagati

The Guruparampara of Acharyas starts from Sriman Nathamunigal. Yamunacharya, the grand son of Nathamunigal the earliest Acharya, whose works are available now. Both of them have followed the path of Saranagati for attaining Sriman Narayana. Yamuna wrote eight works : Siddhi-traya, Agama Pramanya,

Gitarthasamgraha, Mahapürushanirnaya, Stotra Ratna and Catusloki. He was moved by the teachings of Rama Misra on Bhagavad Gita particularly Charamasloka. His elaborate and detailed exposition of Prakrti, Purusa, Purusottama, Bhakti and Saranagati are very much exemplary in Gitarthasamgraha. His Gitarthasamgraha is the basis for Ramanuja's Gita Bhasya and as well as Vedanta Desika's Gitarthasara. According to Yamunacharya, the first twelve Slokas of seventh Adhyaya in Gita are devoted to an exposition of God's nature. In other words, it is hidden from the common human beings by material nature called Prakruti or Maya, comprising of three gunas namely, Satva, Rajas and Tamas and the spell of His Maya can be dispelled by means of self-surrender to God.³

Yamuna by showing the relationship of Nathamunigal, as his grand father, performs Saranagati in his Stotra Ratna finds clear echoes. The famous quotation where he seeks refuge with God comes to one's mind : "You are my son, father, dear friend, You are the friend and Guru of the world. I am yours, Your servant, one of Your retinue, I have sought refuge with You; Your is now the burden (of my welfare)".⁴ The original passage runs as follows:

*Pita tvam, matatvam dayita-tanayastvam, priyasuhrtu
Tvamevatvam mitram, gururasi, gatisca; jagatam |
Tvadiyas tvad-bhrtyas tava parijanastvad-gatiraham
Prapanna's caivam, satyam ahamptavaivasmi hi bharah ||*

Yamunacharya's Stotra Ratna consists sixty five Slokas in which he describes the beauties of the Lord Paramapadanandha in 15 Slokas. It said that Stotra Ratna is the quintessence of Dvayamantra. He describes the greatness of God as transcendent

and surpassing the qualities of other deities. He writes his own complete surrender to God and entire dependence on His mercy. In some of the Slokas the doctrine of Saranagati is enlightened and there is also many philosophical statements. He gives an expression of the wholehearted surrender or Saranagati to the Lord which indirectly gives the meaning of Dvayamantra. In other words, he describes how his mind, forsaking everything is deeply attracted to the Lord, and the sense of his supreme helplessness and absolute abnegation.⁵ The original Sloka runs as follows :

*Na dharma – nistosmi naca tma-vedi na bhaktimams
tvac-carana-ravinde |
Akincanaananyagatis saranya tvatpadamulam saranam
prapadye ||*

From the twenty third stanza, to twenty seventh stanza, the notion of Saranagati is elaborated. In the twenty eighth stanza Yamunacharya describes services or Kainkarya to Lord. From thirty to forty six stanzas he explained the importance of Srimathae and Narayana and also elaborated the significance of the syllable Namaha occurring in the 2nd sentence of Dyayamantra. He showed that Saranagati is the only means for attaining the highest goal in sixtieth and sixty second stanza.

It is said in Guruparampara Prabhavam that, it was during the sojourn at Kanchipuram, Yamunacharya accompanied by Kanchipurna, spotted by mere pierce look, young Ramanuja amidst the pupils of Yadavaprakasa at the holy shrine of Lord Varadaraja. At once he relaxed the anxiety of mental revelation for having spotted the glittering Ramanuja, a scholar of his expectations and did Prapatti at the feet of Lord Varadaraja for the betterment of

Ramanuja. Yamunacharya blessed him as ‘Am Mudalvan’ (the Chief Personage) to become his edifying force in the spread of gospel of Sri Vaishnavism.^{5(a)}

Ramanuja and Saranagati

As a successor of Yamunacharya, Ramanuja occupies very important place in Sri Vaishnava tradition. The works of Ramanuja are : Vedarthasamgraha, Sri Bhasya, Gita Bhasya, , Vedantasara, Vedanta Deepa, Gadyatraya (Saranagati Gadya, Vaikunta Gadya, Sriranga Gadya) and Nityam. In most of these works the doctrine of Saranagati is reflected directly or indirectly. Ramanuja in his first work Vedarthasamgraha says : “*Tasya atmanaha karmakruta vichitragunamaya prakriti samsarga rupath samsarah moksho bhagavat prapatti mantarena na upapadyathe iti*” || which means that the release of the soul from the Samsara in the form of its natural conjunction with Prakruti, which is due to Karma and consists in various gunas’, is impossible without resorting to the Lord.⁶

In his texts, Ramanuja showed an easy way of Saranagati, as a Upaya (mean) only to attain Moksha for the majority of ignorant and depressed people, who could not follow the rigorous practice of Bhaktiyoga. He is very faithful to the Sastras in his Sri Bhasya and in Gita Bhasya he expresses his thoughts freely in an uninhibited manner. The doctrine of Saranagati finds a little place in Sri Bhasya where as in Gita Basya Bhakti as well as Saranagati are dealt in an elaborate manner. That is why he described in his Gita Bhasya as : “*Bhaktiyoga mavatara yamasa*” there is a direct reference to the word Saranagati by Ramanuja in his Sri Bhasya. The text reads in the following way :

Sa khalvantaryamitayopasanasyapi nirvartakah.....
vasikar-
yopasananirvrttyupayakas tha bhutah paramaprapyasea sa
eva ... tasya ca vasikaranam tacsaranagatireva” -

The above passage means “He (God), being the inner controller, is the accomplisher of the (fruit of the) Upasana as well..... only. He is the supreme object and the means for perfecting the Upasana for attracting (Him). To attract Him (to you) is only taking refuge in Him”.⁷

Ramanuja’s Gadyatraya (Saranagati Gadya, Vaikunta Gadya and Sriranga Gadya) is in prosedy form. The Saranagati Gadya is the first of the three Gadyas of Ramanuja. It is a conversation between him and Lord Ranganatha and His Consort (Sri Lakshmi) and is a live exposition of the doctrine of Saranagati. In Srirangam (center for Sri Vaishnava spiritual activities) on Panguni Uttiram day of Tamil month Lord Ranganatha sat in His court with Sri Lakshmi on throne and Ramanuja stood before them, surrendered himself and his all to the Divine couple and rendered the Saranagati Gadya. It is a practical treatise on Saranagati. This Gadya begins with prayer to Sri Lakshmi (Sridevi). In this prayer, Ramanuja seeks Sridevi as his refuge and request Her to bless him for sincere Saranagati at the feet of the supreme Lord done by him, as deemed to be in proper setting and bear the desired fruit. Here the idea is that ‘She’ should intercede on his behalf and see that Her beloved Pathi (Lord) accepts his supplication and grants the desired fruit of being accepted in His service. This Gadya is an elaborate treatise on Dvayamantra in which the eternal association of Lakshmi with the Lord is emphasised.⁸ Thus, Saranagati Gadya focuses the

concept of Saranagati in detail. Ramanuja preached the doctrine of Saranagati to his countless disciples. He himself rendering the Saranagati in the form of Mantra like : “*Sriman-Narayana, asaranya-saranya, ananya-saranah, tva-padaravindayugalam saranamaham prapadye*”. Thus, Saranagati Gadya highlights the importance of Saranagati of souls to Lakshmi who is Purushakara (recommendatory authority) and the mother of all living beings. Ramanuja pleads Lord Sri Ranganatha to allow him to serve Him at all times in his Sriranga Gadya. He takes refuge under Him only. The Vaikunta Gadya is an exposition of the rapturous and transcendental beauty and bliss of Vaikunta.

Ramanuja advices all the Jivas to make absolute and unconditional self-surrender to Lord Narayana. Yamunacharya’s Stotra Ratna and Gitarthasamgraha have influenced Ramanuja so much and its theme are embedded in his Vaikunta Gadya and Saranagati Gadya.

According to Ramanuja Saranagati Gadya should be reviewed not in terms of any individual or single work, but in the full spectrum of all his works. Vedanta Desika opines that the doctrine of Bhakti is dealt with full length in Sri Bhasya and Gita Bhasya and the Gadyas deal with Saranagati.⁹ The Gadya elaborates that Saranagati should be complete and unconditional. It is not for perfecting other Sadhanas, but for the attainment of the eternal service of the Lord. Hence Saranagati that is observed in this Gadyam is definitely for divine communion. Then what is the necessity of prayer through Parabhakti, Parajnana and Paramabhakti. The Bhakti here is not for Moksha but for life-long Bhakti of a Prapanna. Hence Saranagati here is not for enrichment

and fulfilment of Bhakti, but for the attainment of Moksha directly. This Gadya depicts : “*Atha bandhanivrtteranantara bhavinih paribhakti parignana paramabhkti prarthayate*”.¹⁰

While describing Charamasloka, in Gita Bhasya, Ramanuja expounds Saranagati and its relationship to Bhaktiyoga. The same idea is echoed by him in his Vedarthasamgraha. Ramanuja observes that earnest and single minded Bhakti culminates in the most vivid and immediate vision of the Lord and such an intense Bhakti is not possible without the practising of Saranagati. “*Paramapurusha charanaravinda saranagati janita tadabhimukyasya sadacharya upadesa upabhrimhita sastradhigate that vayathatmya avabhoda.... Paramapurusha Charanaravinda yugalanys that neyasa tat bhaktikarita.....*” which means that all mass of evil karmas will melt away by amassing unequalled good karmas – say – when he has become wholly dedicated to God as a result of his taking refuge at His lotus like feet, when he throws himself altogether at the lotus feet of the Supreme Person”....¹¹

Thus Ramanuja assigns a very special status to Saranagati in his Gadyatrayas. Vedanta Desika calls these Gadyas as Sarasvatam and Sasvatam. It is also stated that all the other works of Ramanuja, though great, are only preparations for studying great Saranagati Gadya. It exposes the three supreme Rahasyas namely Tirumantra, Dvayamantra and Charamasloka. These are well explained chapter IV (p.73). This Gadya is considered to be the supreme exposition of Ramanuja by all sections of his disciples.

Vaikunta Gadya proclaims that constant chanting of Dvayamantra by an aspirant would definitely help to attain Supreme

Reality. Ramanuja vows in this Gadya that Saranagati at the Lord's feet is direct sadhana to attain Supreme bliss. Thus Ramanuja exhorts all, in this Gadyam to take refuge with God to be saved. He says as follows :

*Parama Purusam Bhagavantam Narayanam Svamitvena suhrtvena gurtvena ca parigraha...Srimatascaranaravinda yugalam ananyatna Sanjivanena tadgata sarvabhavena sarenamanu vrajet.*¹²

Hence, Ramanuja has firmly stated in his Vaikunta Gadyam that Saranagati at the feet of the God is the direct means for attainment of Supreme bliss of servitude of the Lord. Again he repeats that "*Ekantikatyantika tat padambuja dvaya paricaryaika manorathaha*"¹³ it means, for the attainment of supreme, there is no other way than surrender at His feet. This is again expressed in Vaikunta Gadyam as follows : "*Tatpraptaye ca tatpadam bujadvaya prapattch anyanname kalpakoti sahasrenapi sadana mastiti manvanaha*" - it says that Saranagati is the direct means to the goal of God realization.¹⁴

Thus according to Ramanuja, even if an aspirant who is inefficient in performing Karmayoga, Jnanayoga and other Upasanas and who do not possess true knowledge of reality can attain release from bondage and be blessed with the infinite bliss of divine communion out of mercy of the Lord through Saranagati Sadhana.

Next to Ramanuja, several Acharyas like Kuraththazhwan, Embar, Bhattar, Pillan, Nanjeeyar, Nampillai, Periyavachchan Pillai and so on enriched Saranagati in their texts.

Pillai Lokacharya and Saranagati

Pillai Lokacharya, was a star of the first magnitude in the galaxy of Sri Vaishnava divine of the 13th century. He wrote 18 tratises of secrets know as Astadasa Rahasyam. The three Rahasyas i.e., Tirumantra, Dvaya, Charma Sloka are elaborately discussed in Mumukshuppadi, Sri Vachana Bhushanam, Premeya Sagaram, Prapanna Parithranam, Navavida Sambandam, Yadruchikappadi, Paranthappadi, Sriyappatippadi, Tanidvayam, Sarasamgraham, Tanicharmam and Tani Pranavam. All these works are the quintessence for Saranagati literature and doctrines. God's grace is irresistible and it is God's gift to all the Jivas. He practised Acharyaabhimana and submission to his Acharya for attaining God's grace. He regarded Saranagati is the only sadhana that was resorted by all the Yogas. He maintained that awareness of one's dependence (Seshatvam) on Lord is enough to make Saranagati eligible as a sadhana. According to him, the Alvars practiced Prapatti only in Archa form of God¹⁵. Again he says, the Para form of God is like Avarana Jalam (water above the world) which one cannot see; Antaryami is like underneath the earth, which one cannot see; Vyuha form is like a milky ocean, Vibhava is like the rivers once over flowed and Archa form is like the storage of water once flowed which spread into 108 places.¹⁶ Again he continues that "one does not require a deep learning or knowledge like Acharya or Alvars to practice Saranagati or self-surrender".¹⁷ According to him the bondage (bandha) is true and the removal of bondage is also true. Saranagati or self-surrender to God, is regarded as a means to remove bondage. This Saranagati may be direct (avyavahita) and indirect (vyavahita). In the first case, the Saranagati is complete and absolute and done once for all. The

indirect Saranagati is the continual meditation on God through love of Him, along with the performance of obligatory duties and the non-commission of prohibited actions.¹⁸ Pillai Lokacharya and his brother Azhakiya-manavalapperumal Nayanar did a good service in writing on the literature of Saranagati in their works viz., the Srivacana-bhusana and Acharya-hrdaya, respectively. For the Nayanar's work on Arulicheyal Rahasyam also enlightens the Saranagati Sadana through the elaborations of three Rahasyas.

When we study the nature of Saranagati and its important role in the life of Prapanna, it is essential to know how the Acharyas showed the path in their texts. Pillai Lokacharya in his text Srivachana Bhushana, elaborately discussed about Saranagati. I am giving below some of the tenets. There is no restriction to do Saranagati a particular place or particular time or particular type or eligibility or its benefits.¹⁹

While narrating each item elaborately by Manavala Mamuni for the Sri Vachana Bhushana Sutra, he quotes the following Sloka of Bharadwaja Samhita which states the non-restriction of forms for doing Saranagati.

“నజాతిభేదం నకులం నలిజ్గం నగుణక్రియాః।
నదేశ కాలే నావస్థాం యోగోఽప్యాయమపేక్షతే॥
బ్రహ్మక్షత్రివిశశ్శూదాః స్త్రియశ్చానరజాతయః।
సర్వఏవ ప్రపద్యేర్థ సర్వధాతారము ఛ్యతమ్”⁵⁴

Only ‘Vishaya niyamam is necessary’²⁰ which means one has to perform Saranagati in the place where the fullness of attributes of God exists.²¹ For doing particular Karma one has to locate a Punyakshetra, Vasantha Kalam, Sastras etc. But for doing

Saranagati no particular time or place is necessary like Vibhishana directly came without any restriction like finding a place or time.²²

Pillai Lokacharya, in another Sutra, clearly establishes that in Mantra Ratna, in the first word 'Srimathe', 'Math' implies the 'Nitya Yoga' of Piratti who has no restriction to help the Jiva who comes at any time or in any place.²³ The original text reads "*Ivvartham mantra ratnathil (Dvayam) Pradama Padaththile suspashtam*". In another Sutra, he states that there is no particular eligibility to practice Saranagati, as Dharma Putra, Drawpati, Kakasura, Kaaliyan, Sri Gajendralvan, Sri Vibhishanalvan, Perumal (Sri Rama) and Ilayala Perumal (Lakshmana) etc. did Saranagati without any restriction.²⁴

Elaborating the above Sutras in showing the number of persons who did Saranagati without any eligibility in the commentary Tirunarayanapuraththu Aayee it is said that Dharmaputra and others who is Kshetriya, in the line of second to Brahmin, did Saranagati at the feet of Lord Krishna with so much of faith, as follows :

ద్రాపద్యా సహితాస్సర్వేసమశ్చక్రుర్జనార్దనమ్

Drawpadi, who is not eligible to pronounce any Mantra did Saranagati without any shy, at the feet of Dwarakanatha like :

శ్రజ్జచక్రగదాపాణే ద్వాపరకా నిలయాచ్యుత ।

గోవింద పుండరీకాక్ష మాం శరణాగతమ్ ॥²⁵

Kakasura, who did a great sin (disguised himself from Devarupa) by touching Sita, did Saranagati at all places and lastly fell down at the feet of Rama. It is said as follows :

సపిత్రా చ పరిత్యక్త స్స రైశ్చ సమహర్షిభిః।

త్రిన్కాన్ సమృత్రిక్రమ్యతమేవ శరణంగతః ॥^{26myO}

Kaaliyan, who is full of 'Thamasic' qualities did Saranagati at the holy feet of Lord Krishna, said as follows :

సోహంతే దేవదేయేశ నార్చనాదౌస్తు తానచ |
సామర్థ్యవాన్ కృపామాత్రమనోవృతిః ప్రసీదమే ||. ²⁷

Sri Gajendra Alvan, who was born as animal creature and who wishes to do Kainkarya by putting lotus flowers before fading at the feet of Lord did Saranagati said as follows :

పరమాపద మాపన్నో మనసాన్చిన్తయద్దరిమ్ |
సతునాగవర శ్రీమాన్ నారాయణపరాయణః ||. ²⁸

Sri Vibhishana, who was by birth Rakshasa, and Dharmatma, who dispelled the relationship of his brother Ravana did Saranagati said as follows :

సోహంపరుషిత స్తేన దాసవచ్చావమానితః |
త్వత్ప్రపుత్రాంశ్చదారాంశ్చ రాఘవం శరణంగతః ||. ²⁹

Rama, Otherwise called Perumal, Himself, Supreme, did Saranagati to the king of Ocean, only to show the nature of Saranagati by practicing Himself, said as follows :

బాహు మృజగభోగాభముపధాయారి సూదానః |
అజ్ఞలిం ప్రాజ్ఞ ఖఃకృత్వా ప్రతిశిశ్యేమహోదధేః ||. ³⁰

Ilayaperummal (Lakshmana), who accompanies Rama, as a servitude, also did Saranagati at the holy feet of Rama, inseparably wanted do Kainkarya said as follows :

సఖ్రాతుశ్చర్యణౌగాఢం నిపీడ్యరఘునన్దనః |
సీతామువాచాలియశా రామచ్ఛమహోవ్రతమ్ ||. ³¹

Muchukundan did Saranagati to Lord Krishna with the following words:

సోహంత్యాం శరణమపారమప్రయేయం సప్రూప్తః పరమపదంయతోనికిచ్చత్
సంసారశ్రమ పరితాప్త తప్తచేతానిర్వాణే పరిణతథాన్ని పాభిలాషః॥³²

In the commentary (Srivachana Bhushana) of Manavala Mamuni some more names of those who did Saranagati also mentioned for the Sutra supra and they are: Kashatrabandu, Madhavi, the Kaaliyapathni, Indra and other Devatas and Vanaras (monkeys) in Ramayana.³³

Kshatrabandhu, did Saranagati to Lord Vishnu and said as follows:

మూఢో అయమ్ అల్పం అతిరల్ప విచేష్టితోయంక్షిప్తం మనో
అస్యవిషయైర్ నమయిప్రసక్తః ।
ఇత్థం కృపాంకురు మయిప్రణతే ఖిలేశత్వాంస్తోతుమ్ అంబుజ
భవోపిహిదేవనేశః ॥

Madhavi, who did Saranagati stated as follows :

భగవంతం ప్రపన్నా సాభగవంతమవాపహా ।

The wife of Kaaliyan did Saranagati at the holy feet of Lord Krishna on seeing the Kaliyan (serpent of the ocean) who was severely injured by Lord Krishna, she says :

తమ్ ప్రభిన్నశిరోగ్రీవమ్ ఆస్సభ్యః స్రుతశోణితమ్ ।
విలోక్యశరణం జగ్ముస్తత్ప్రత్యో మధుసూదనమ్॥³⁴

Indra and other Devathas, who won by the Armies of Daithiriyas did Saranagati at the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu said as follows :

ప్రణామప్రవణా నాథ దెత్యసైన్యపరాజితాః ।
శరణం త్వమన ప్రాప్తాస్యమస్తాదేవతాగణాః॥ .

The group of Vanaras (monkeys) who injured by Rakshasas dtÑü Saranagati to Lord Vishnu and said as follows :

రాక్ష సైర్యధ్యమానానాం వానరాణాం మహాచమూః।

శరణ్యం శరణం యతా రామం ధశరథాత్మజమ్ ॥

In such a way Aayee and Manavala Mamuni unearthed the thoughts of Pillai Lokacharya in identifying the Adhikaries who did Saranagati.

Vedanta Desika and Saranagati

Next to Ramanuja, Vedanta Desika emerged as a very exponent of Sri Vaishnavism and he has enriched the popularity and significance of Saranagati in all its aspects in his famous work ‘Srimad Rahasyatrayasara’. Along with Rahasyatrayasara, he has established an independent validity of Prapatti in his writings in both Sanskrit and Tamil such as Tatparya teeka, Gitasara, Nyasavimsati, Nyasa-tilaka, Nikseparaksha, Adaikkalappattu and so on. Vedanta Desika analyses the Saranagati Gadya by comparing with each word of Moolamantra, Dvayamantra and Charamasloka. Though the literature of Saranagati was available prior to Vedanta Desika, it is he, who has elaborated, reaffirmed and consolidated the tenets of Saranagati. His work Rahasyatrayasara marks a vital land mark in the history of Srivaishnava philosophy. It deals in a masterly way about the different dimensions of Saranagati. He gives the quintessence of the doctrine of Saranagati thus :

“*Suduskarena sochetyo yana yenestahetuna,
Sa satasyahame veti caramasloke samgrahah*”.

It says, “when a man falls into despair or grief, because he is not able to adopt certain Upayas which are prescribed as productive of the desired results to that man I stand as those Upayas and guarantee the results”.

Development of Vaishnavism

Although Ramanuja did not write by himself any commentary on Alvars hymns in general and particularly Nammalvar’s Tiruvoymozhi but he gave impetus to the task of writings on the Tiruvoymozhi through his Jnana Putra Tirukkurukaipiran Pillan to write commentary. When Alvar’s work came to be studied by Acharyas such as Sriman Nathamunigal, they grew up a school of combined Tamil and Sanskrit learning (Manipravala style). As the days passed away, it developed importance among the Acharyas of Sri Vaishnava community by dialogues and discussions on Alvar’s hymns. As Prof. J. Parthasarathy says, it is a matter of common knowledge that certain differences in interpretational refinements of the concept of Prapatti or Saranagati came to prominence in the post-Ramanuja era of Vaishnava history. He further says that Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika are agreed in exalting Prapatti to a higher status than that of the ordinary Vaidikadharmā.³⁵ It is said that to defend the religious dogmas dominated by other religions, Ramanuja wrote nine texts only in Sanskrit, which were based fundamentally with the doctrines of Dravida Veda i.e., Alvars’ hymns, apart from upanishads and so on. Hence, Nayanar says, Bhasyakarar Idukondū Sūtra Vakyaṅgal Oruṅgaviduvar” in his Acharya Hrudyam, which means that Bhasyakara, while writing commentary for Brahma Sūtra, used to apply the theme of Alvars’ hymns.³⁶

When we study the texts of Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika one can identify the inner thought of each Acharya in understanding the meanings on various topics. I am herewith enumerating the views expressed by both Acharyas in knowing the comprehensive account of Saranagati. Some of their expressions relating to Saranagati are :

1. Vedanta Desika believed that the Jiva should seek God's grace in helpless conditions, only then the Jiva can receive refuge and help from Lord, while Pillai Lokacharya opines that God's mercy is flowing towards Jivas unceasingly and there is no necessity for Jiva to surrender to God.

2. According to Vedanta Desika, 'Sri' is as omnipervasive like Lord Vishnu (Her husband), whereas in Pillai Lokacharya's opinion that Sri is like other infinite souls. But 'Sri' is an exceptional soul because Sri cannot undergo the state of bondage.

3. Vedanta Desika further describes that the path of Saranagati can be adopted for those who cannot follow other sadhanas such as Karmayoga, Jnanayoga and Bhaktiyoga and for those who seek to attain Moksha immediately. But for Pillai Lokacharya, Saranagati becomes Sadhana for any one who knows one's nature to be absolutely servitude (Seshatva) to God.

4. In Vedanta Desika's opinion, the successful practice of Saranagati depends on five important Angas such as Anukulyasamkalpa, etc., whereas, for Pillai Lokacharya, simple surrender to God with full faith would follow all other things automatically like sweet follows when one threshes paddy.

5. Vedanta Desika considers that Saranagati is a consequence of the grace of God, while Pillai Lokacharya says that Saranagati may be considered as mean for the grace of God.

6. Vedanta Desika believes that God's forgiveness can be received only on performing Saranagati, irrespective of whether Prapanna has committed sins knowingly or unknowingly. On the contrary, Pillai Lokacharya opines that it is enough if one can remember one's Saranagati performed earlier.

7. Another important interpretation is Vedanta Desika explained the mystic experiences of the soul by drawing a comparison of baby monkey clinging to its mother monkey that jumps from tree to tree. This is also called Markatakisoranyaya. It implies that in Saranagati, the Prapanna must cling to God, so that he can be carried to Moksha by God's grace. This is also called Simhavanaguptanyaya. But Pillai Lokacharya compares the mystical experiences of soul to a cat carrying a kitten with its mouth without the effort of the kitten. It is also known as Marjalakisoranyaya. It says when cat-kitten is helpless and the mother cat grasps it with its mouth and carries it from place to place for its welfare. In the same way, in extreme helpless conditions the prapana is taken by God Himself to the ultimate destination namely, Moksha. The above examples are nothing but different stages of helpless conditions to overcome such impediments by the grace of God.

The religion of Saranagati was a subject of study from ancient Vedas down to the hymns of Alvars'. Also a number of post and pre-Ramanujaite Acharyas have formulated their views to this doctrine and the fact is known from the fore gone pages.

From the accounts given in the above pages of this chapter, it is learnt that important Acharyas like Yamuna, Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika, who established the path of Saranagati systematised this doctrine to play a pivotal role as a

Sadhana to uplift from the clutches of Samsara and reach the abode of God. It is said that if Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika not given such a clear and systematic account of the Saranagati even now this doctrine would be vague and indefinite. Hence, the credit of explaining, elaborating and reaffirming on solid grounds, the doctrine of Saranagati should go to the above Acharyas. Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika have explained the inner meaning and significance of Saranagati in all its aspects in their works. Thus, the exposition of Saranagati, as a Sadhana is all comprehensive and definite. Hence, this concept shown by the Purvacharyas become a basis for detailed study as a Sadhana to attain Moksha.

Following this, I will explain further the Angas of Saranagati, the three Mantras implying Saranagati, Bhakti and Saranagati, and arguments in-support of Saranagati and conduct of Prapanna in detail which forms the literature of Saranagati.

Angas or accessories of Saranagati

The practice of Saranagati requires certain preconditions or Angas. According to Ahirbudhnya Samhita, there are six Angas or accessories as follows :

*“Anukulyasya sankalpaha, pratikulyasya varjanam
raksishyatiti visvaso goptrtvavaranam tadha
atmaniksepakarpanye shadvidha saranagati”.*³⁷

The Angas are : Anukulyasamkalpa, Pratikulyavarjanam, Karpanyam, Mahavisvasam, Goptrtvavaranam and Atmaniksepa. Out of these, the first five are Angas and the last one namely, Atmaniksepa is Angi which is equivalent to Saranagati. This is the

reason why Saranagati is called Sadangayoga. The entire procedure of Saranagati with its Angas is comparable to the Astangayoga of Patanjali. The Astanga yoga of Patanjali consists of eight steps-Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. The last stage Samadhi is the 'Angi' and rest are called 'Angas'. It is named after Astangayoga, because it consists of seven Angas and one Angi. So also Saranagati is called 'Sadangayoga' because it comprises of five Angas and one Angi.

The term 'yoga' means Sambhanda - joining together. What does the yoga aim at joining? Yoga aims at communion of Jivatma with Paramatma. Both Astangayoga and Sadanga yoga ultimately aim at this endeavour. Therefore, they are rightly called as 'yogas'. However, depending upon the number of steps involved in their procedure, Bhakti is called Astanga yoga and Saranagati is called as Sadangayoga.³⁸ Saranagati cannot be complete and total in the absence of even one of the Angas. Let us discuss the various steps involved in Sadangayoga of Saranagati as stated by Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika. Pillai Lokacharya says that these five stages are "Angas" for doing Saranagati i.e., these five stages automatically emerge after doing Saranagati by a Prapanna.³⁹

Anukulyasamkalpa and Pratikulyavarjanam

Pillai Lokacharya says that 'Anukulyam' means 'priyatvam' i.e. being loveable to God. Further he says that as stated in Bhagavad Gita that one who shows Bhakti towards God, to that person God will show His love, which means he must be 'Ananyaprayojanam' i.e. one who seeks God only as beneficiary without other benefits.⁴⁰ According to Vedanta Desika the association of aspirant with God results the negation of the egoism

and thereby seeks Lord's redemption. Subsequently, the aspirant cultivates pure Satvic nature and believes that he lives only for the satisfaction of God. This belief of God would help him to mould his character. Then he decides to do only that which pleases God and avoids that displease God. In this context Rahasyatrasara states that, the aspirant through his Sesatva (servitude) knowledge realizes that the Jagat (world) consisting of Jivas and Ajivas which constitutes the Sarira (body) of God and so he determines the course of actions which is agreeable to all.⁴¹

Karpanya

Karpanya, which is a third Anga of Saranagati otherwise called helplessness, helps to invoke God's mercy. In the state of helpless conditions, there must be a total annihilation of 'I' or the sense of egoism. This stage makes the aspirant to believe that God is the only resort. Then, he clings to God for his peace and protection. Thus helplessness of the aspirant invokes God's mercy and secure redemption for him.

Mahavisvasa

It is a fourth most important Anga of Saranagati. Pillai Lokacharya says that exercising with so much of faith without Sankatrayam (three doubts) on Bhagavadgunas.⁴² Sankatrayam means three doubts i.e. Upayaphalagunathva, Uddesya Durlabhatva and Svakrutadosadarsana.⁴³ Vedanta Desika says that it is nothing but complete and absolute faith in the saving grace of the Lord. Saranagati is to be motivated by having supreme faith or Mahavisvasa in the redemptive grace of the Lord. Even the slightest doubt regarding the efficacy of Saranagati will lead to collapse the basic structure of Saranagati like a pack of cards. Thus

Mahavisvasa saves the aspirant from dangers and anxieties. Further Lakshmi Tantra states that by practicing Mahavisvasa the grace of Lord will protect arises from the performance of the desired Upaya.⁴⁴

Goptrtvavarna

This is the fifth required Anga of Saranagati. Pillai Lokacharya says that Goptrtvavarna means the negation of sins that results to attain the liking by taking God as an inseparable means.⁴⁵ According to Vedanta Desika, though Moksha is an ultimate goal of life, it is not easy to attain like other objects. Mere prayer alone will not fetch Moksha; one should try hard and yearn for it. Without asking or repeating again and again no good things will be given. If aspirant cannot ask repeatedly again and again, Moksha cannot be granted by God. Lakshmi Tantra observes, “No protection would be granted when it is not sought”.⁴⁶

The above five Angas are to be practiced regularly to realize Atmaniksepa which is an Angi. Lokacharya means that by surrendering all responsibilities of Atma and its things like Sarira etc. to God. In other words Atma, Atmeyamana Nikila Bharasamarpanam.⁴⁷ Vedanta Desika says that, the self-surrender invariably follows with Supreme faith in receiving the grace of the God. This supreme faith will lead to self-offering to the Lord. The protection from the Lord will be extended only to those who have surrendered the entire responsibilities including his own self to the Lord. This is called Svarupasamarpana (to the Lord).

Further, Vedanta Desika has explained these Angas of Saranagati-distinctly to call Saranagati as a yoga. Of the five Angas, Anukulyasamkalpa and Pratikulyavarjanam bring the aspirant to

avoid all displeasures to God. Karpanya brings the aspirant to believe that he has no other way than God. Mahavisvasa provides the aspirant to have a complete faith in God. Through Goptrtvavarānam, the redemptive grace of the Lord is revealed and it saves the aspirant from the clutches of bondage. Thus, each Anga plays a definite role in moulding an aspirant as a yogin and Saranagati as a yoga for easy practice.

Ramayana - the classical example that illustrates the Angas of Saranagati

The Trijata's episode of Ramayana can be taken as a classical example to illustrate the Angas of Saranagati. In the Kingdom of Ravana when Sita was surrounded by lady Rakshasas and began to accuse her, Trijata, the daughter of Vibhishana, the Rakshasa leader formed against them and said : "Enough of your cruel words"⁴⁸. Here Trijata's words are exhortation to avoid displeasure to the soul. This is the fundamental principle of Pratikulyavarjanam which is a second Anga of Saranagati. Trijata's advice to use only conciliatory language is suggestive of being disposed to do things that will please God is implicative of the Anga called Anukulyasamkalpa. Again Trijata's warning, "Terrible dread has indeed be fallen the Raksasas from Rama" reveals the other state of Anga i.e. Karpanya or utter helplessness. Trijata again declares, "Let us request Sita to protect us. Though all are threatened her before, beg of her now O Rakshasis, do not ask whether she will protect us. Such talks are vain."⁴⁹ This utterance reveals the prayer for seeking protection which is goptrtvavarānam another important Anga of Saranagati. The self-surrender or Atmaniksepa is revealed by the statement : "Sita, the Janaka's daughter, is surely bent on showering her graciousness to those who do her obeisance".⁵⁰

The word 'obeisance' in the above statement implies the Angi of Saranagati. Thus we can see in Trijata's episode a demonstration of the Angas of Saranagati as outlined in the Ramayana. This is the reason for calling the Ramayana as the golden bedrock of Nyasa Brahma Vidya or Saranagati-Vidya.

Bharanyasa or Complete and absolute Self-surrender

Vedanta Desika explained Saranagati by drawing a comparison. He said that when a desired object is beyond the limits of one's endeavour, then one must seek a suitable means for attaining it. Similarly to attain Moksha one must adopt a suitable means namely, Saranagati or placing the entire responsibility on God. It is declared in Saranagati with specific thought like : This object should be accomplished (for me) by you without making any effort of my own⁵¹. This self- surrender of placing the burden on God requires a supreme faith or Mahavisvasa in obtaining the grace of the Lord. Then only it is possible for one to place the entire responsibilities on God. This is called 'complete self-surrender' or Bharanyasa. Here one must remember a fact that an aspirant has no independence either to perform Saranagati or attaining fruits from it. Here he should realize that he is just a part of God and belongs to Him only. God is always merciful towards the suffering souls and it becomes necessary for the Jiva to adopt an Upaya to get liberation. It is said that surrendering one's self to god is just like some one surrenders a jewel belonging to another to that person himself.⁵²

Due to ignorance the jiva claims possession of everything. When realization dawns on the Jiva that he is totally dependent on God,

he overcomes his egoism. At that time the aspirant says-I am surrendering this self to You, which is verily your property alone.⁵³ This surrender or placing the whole responsibilities on lotus feet of the God is called Bharanyasa.

It is interesting to know that in Rahasyatrayasara, Vedanta Desika classifies Bharanyasa into three categories. They are: Svarupasamarpana, Bharasamarpana and Phalasamarpana. It is necessary to know the complete nature of all these factors in a phased manner.

Svarupasamarpana

The Jiva must come to a realization that he is only a servitude (Seshatva) to God, he belongs to Him and his very being exists in Him and most importantly he is dependent on Him for everything. Lakshmi Tantra also underlines this in the Sloka 17.79. When he forgo the feeling of 'I' or 'ego' and offer his self to God is called Svarupasamarpana.

Bharasamarpana

The Bharanyasa plays a vital role in the process of self-surrender. The Jiva must place all his responsibilities including his protection to the Lord. Also he must come to the stage of thinking that he cannot live even a fraction of second without the guidance of God. In that stage he must place wholeheartedly all his responsibilities on God who is both Siddha and Sadhya of endeavours. This reminds the saying of Lakshmi Tantra Sloka, 17.79. This is called Bharasamarpana.

Phalasamarpana

This is the third aspect of Bharnyasa. In this state of Saranagati, the Prapanna must forget all his desires of protection and feel that he is a part and parcel of God. He must believe that he lives for the sake of God and to implement His commands. He must annihilate the feelings of 'I' and 'We' and think in terms of 'me' and 'us'. The only objective of an aspirant is to serve God and have no concern of the result of his self-surrender. This kind of surrendering of self, responsibilities and the consequences of the fruits of his actions at the feet of the Lord is called Phalasamarpana. Thus Saranagati involves three important aspects - Svarupasamarpana, Bharasamarpana and Phalasamarpana. So these constitutes the ingredient factors of the very concept of Saranagati.

Requirements of Saranagati

Saranagati is easy to practice and is open to all irrespective of caste, creed, colour and gender with supreme faith in Lord Narayana. But it has to fulfil certain required conditions. These conditions may be one or combination of many of the following :

- a) when the aspirant is not able to practice other sadhanas such as Karmayoga, Jnanayoga and Bhaktiyoga etc;
- b) when the aspirant does not possess the knowledge of Sastras relating to Upasanas;
- c) birth is not the criteria for performing Saranagati; and
- d) inability to bear any delay in attaining Moksha.

The special requisites to be adopted in the practice of Saranagati are :

- a) The Prapanna must know thoroughly the relationship between Jivatma and Paramatma. i.e. Sessa-Seshi bhava;

- b) Akinachanyam which means no other source of Sadhana (Kaimudal Illamai);
- c) Ananyagatitvam which means God is only a means than any other way (Verugadhi Illamai);

Hence, we may draw the conclusion that Saranagati is for such a people who have faith and who cannot follow the sadhana of Bhaktiyoga, because of their lack of knowledge of Sastras. It also indicates that Saranagati is only alternative to Bhaktiyoga and assures to attain God to one and all without any restriction or reservation. It brings desired fruits very quickly without any opposition.

Another crucial point to bear in mind regarding Saranagati is that it should be practiced only once along with its Angas by taking utmost care and devotion. The second time performance of Saranagati is not accepted by scriptures. It is compared to a clever archer who shoots the arrow at the target only once. In Mundakopanishad, the idea about the soul to be installed in God is described as follows : The syllable “OM” is bow, the soul is arrow, Brahmin is target, so one must aim at God with greatest care and devotion. To practice it one must have whole-hearted commitment in doing so.⁵⁵ That is why Saranagati is compared to a Brahmastra which will not tolerate the adoption of other Sadhanas along with it. It is said in Ahirbudhnya Samhita that a person who takes the path of Saranagati achieves the fruits of all tapas, sacrifices, pilgrimages gifts and attain salvation easily without resorting to any other methods.⁵⁶ This shows the greatness of Saranagati over the other Sadhanas.

Types of Saranagati

The important types of Saranagati are as follows : Uktinista, Acharyanista, Svanista, Artaprapatti and Drpta-prapatti.

Uktinista

This is a kind of Saranagati practiced by those aspirants who do not have the knowledge of the Angas of Saranagati. But they have a firm belief that they can attain liberation only through God. They also fully convinced that God would grant Mukti just by offering their prayers to Him. All they have to do is to pronounce before the God the words of Saranagati in the manner taught by their Acharyas i.e., “May You take upon Yourself the burden of protecting me”.⁵⁷ The utterance of words of Saranagati is most efficacious. This is like surrender of an ignorant prince to an emperor with the utterance of words which his nurses taught to him. Just as poor and illiterate boy who does not know the force of appeal of his utterances viz., “Bhavati Biksham Dehi” and gets a favourable response at the doors of a good men, so also mere words in praise of Lord will lead to Saranagati, though the aspirant does not understand the subtlety of them as scriptures are clothed in Sanskrit language. This means that if we can converse to God in the most sincere and fervent manner, it will definitely evoke God’s blessings and affections. Ramanuja echoes the same thought in his Saranagati Gadyam whatever may be the method or form you have uttered the Dvayamantra, your redemption is my responsibility.⁵⁸

Acharyanista

Sri Vaishnavism gives utmost importance to the service to Acharyas. It considers ‘service to Acharya is service to God’.

Pillai Lokacharya extremely discussed about the Acharyanista in his Sri Vachana Bhushanam. We may note down some of the tenets here :

By approaching Iswara is like one who requests him by holding His hands to get the things done; by approaching Acharya is like holding the feet of Acharya i.e., prostrating Him and get the things done definitely.⁵⁹ He further says that Acharya is helping both Iswara and his disciple.⁶⁰ Acharya helps Iswara by introducing a Sesha (disciple); Acharya helps his disciple by showing his relationship with Seshi (God);⁶¹ Elaborating the Sutra, Aayee says that Lord who is creating the universe more and more to get a good samartan (Sesha), his attempt fulfills, then Acharya introduces Sesha (His disciple) who is like Sri Kaustuba and likes by God and who is Sarira to God, and who submerged into Samsara, uplift him and by learning his sins hand over him to the Lord; Like wise Acharya helps his disciple by eradicating his ignorance etc. and show him the relationship of God as Seshi and his seha. This is the help of Acharya to Sesha. Further Aayee says that this is like blind man who gets his vision and also helps him to get treasure.⁶²

Hence, Lord also desired to become an Acharya in Krishnavatara where He preached Bhagavad Gita Charma Sloka to Arjuna, his ardent disciple. And in Ramavatara, as a disciple of Vasista, Rama preached Charama Sloka to Vibhishana called Abhayapradanam.⁶³ To such an Acharya who helped the disciple, one cannot equalise in submitting two Nitya Vibhuties and two Leela Vibhuties and two Iswaras if one can create as a token of his help.⁶⁴

Further Pillai Lokacharya says that the relationship (Sesha – Seshi sambanda) of God is common to get one into Samsara according to Karma and get one as a Mukta by showing Krupa whereas the relationship (Acharya – Sishya sambanda) of Acharya is the cause of redeeming from Samsara and to get Moksha.⁶⁵ The help rendered by God is great, as He enlightened a good Acharya to his disciple. Hence God's help is greater than Acharya.⁶⁶ Likewise in several Sutras, Pillai Lokacharya highlights the greatness of Acharya in his Sri Vachana Bhushanam. He finally establishes in a Sutra that “Acharya Abhimaname Uththarakam”⁶⁷ - which means that the Acharya's grace will enlighten the three states of Seshatvasvarupa, Upaya and Purushartha as derived from Tirumantra.⁶⁸ According to Guruparampara Prabhavam, Yamunacharya prayed his Acharya Manakkal Nambi, before he attains Moksha.^{68(a)} Ramanuja prayed his Acharya Yamunacharya, before he attains Moksha.^{68(b)} This is a glorious examples for Acharyanista.

Vedanta Desika succinctly narrates Acharyanista as follows :

In Acharyanista, a service to Acharya is more important rather than service to God. His initiation will help the aspirant to discard what is to be detested and pursue what is desirable. The Acharya is the link between Prapanna and Paramatma. He lights the torch of wisdom in his disciple and sees that it burns continuously. The Acharya's greatest trait is his concern for Prapanna's well being and eagerness with which he will enable him to have peeps into mysticism.⁶⁹ The Acharya is interested in saving the disciple, whereas the Lord is both a judge and a saviour⁷⁰. When Acharya did Saranagati, which also includes the protection of his disciples. The Sandilya Smrti cities this type of Saranagati, where Acharya

has to introduce before the Lord and to say that he considers the disciple as his son, servant and his disciple, who has to be saved. The Prapanna can repay his dept of gratitude to his Acharya, through his services which cannot be adequately compensated, by clinging to the rules set by him and upholding the traditions. In Acharyanista there is a guarantee of fruits of Saranagati when Acharya is delighted by the loyal service of his disciple.

When aspirant follows Acharyanista becomes intimately tied up with his Acharya and he gets saved. The aspirant becomes saved just for the reason that he is Acharya's disciple. In his *Rahasyatrayasara* Vedanta Desikas reiterates the statement of Mudaliyandan that - when a lion leaps from one mountain to another along with inspects that clings to its body, the disciples of Ramanuja also saved when Ramanuja performs Saranagati.⁷¹ This quotation reveals the idea that those who are connected with a Prapanna will surely saved by the blessings of Acharya who did Saranagati. Vedanta Desika too elaborates this idea in his *Nyasa Thilakam*. Just as a blind man is led by one who is not blind and a lame man is taken in the boat across the river by the boat-man and the children of servant of a king enjoy all pleasures of the palace, even though they do not know the King, likewise the disciples of Acharya is sure to attain God through their association with their Acharyas⁷². Of these examples the first one explains the Uktinista, in which there is an effort on aspirant, but there is no knowledge. He works in association with another who possesses the eye of knowledge. The second and third examples are the demonstrations of Acharyanista, in which there is a knowledge but the effort is absent. With the efforts of boat-man and king of a palace the lay man and children of a servant get their desired results respectively.

Thus it is said that the aspirant, following the path of Saranagati all that is necessary is to stick firmly to the attitude of absolute dependence on God, associated with a sense of absolute helplessness. He has no efforts to make other than to keep himself in the prayerful mood; all the other things are done by God. Even according to Ahirbudhnya Samhita, Saranagati is upaya-jnana and not a upaya; it is a mental attitude and does not require any action. It is like a boat on which an aspirant merely sits, while it is the work of boatman to do the rest.⁷³ The text says :

“Atra navi ti dr̥stantad upaya-jnanam eva tu
narenu kr̥tyam anyat tunavikasye’va taddnareh”.

Svanista

According to Pillai Lokacharya, Svanista means that one who obtains Panchasamskara from an Acharya, receives the knowledge on the Sutras relating to Prapatti or Saranagati. Then by the benign grace of Acharya, he will seek God as a mean and to do Kainkarya to Him. This kind of Prapatti is called Svanista. Here the aspirant who has the true knowledge of Jivatman, Paramatman and Parampurusartha may himself seek God and perform Saranagati independently. This kind of Saranagati is called Svanista.⁷⁴ The aspirant who approaches the Lord directly for his Moksha is also called Svanista.⁷⁵ Hence one who has the necessary knowledge, as well as the mode of performance are qualifications to perform Svanista Saranagati.

Aartaprapatti and Drptaprapatti

Pillai Lokacharya, lucidly narrates Prapatti or Saranagati in his text ‘Arthapanchakam’. These are two types : They are

Arthirupa Prapatti and Drptarupa Prapatti. One can practice Sastras which he endowed by the grace of God and he obtains Upadesa from Acharya. Then he gets real knowledge. He feels that his body is an abstacle for the experience of God; likewise he feels living place and the relationship with Acharya. Then to have experience of God in isolation by seeking the Desa, body and Acharya, he will perform complete Saranagati. Nammalvar is a forerunner who exclaimed Tiruvenkatanatha as follows with intense Bhakti in attaining Moksha, 'Tiruvengadattane! pugalonrilla Adiyen' (6.10.10) and did Saranagati as follows :

'Venkatathuraivaruku Namaha' (3.3.6). He further cross questioning the Lord for not showing His grace to take him away from Samsara in the following hymns :

- 'Innam Keduppayo' (Tiruvoymozhi, 6.9.8);
- 'Pala nee Kattippadupayo (Tiruvoymozhi', 6.9.9);
- 'Ini nan pogalottem' (Tiruvoymozhi, 10.10.1).
- 'Tiruvānai Nindranai Kanday' (Tiruvoymozhi, 10.10.2);
- 'Ikkaraiyeri Ilaith thirunden' (Periyalvar Tirumoyzhi, 5.3.7);
- 'Adayavarulai' (Tirumangaiyalvar's Tirumozhi, 1.8.6).

The above hymns expresses Alvars' intense or Arthi to reach Paramapada.⁷⁶

Pillai Lokacharya explains stage by stage Drptaprapatti's Saranagati as follows :

At the end of one's life disgust and fear on the attainment of Svarga or Narakam will born; To redeem them and to get revelation of God, he has to approach a good Acharya; from his initiation, he will seek God as refuge; Then he has to forgo from the undoings

and follow the activities as outlined for such castes in Vedas; and to do Kainkarya to God and His Bhagavatas according to their rite through preaching, worshipping and meditation; and to know the nature of Iswara who is Seshi, Instigator, Swami, Sariri, Supporter, Protector, Enjoyer, Omniscience, Omnipotence and Universal sovereignty. His being modified by all, unequalled and unsurpassed, having all desires materialised and every will realised; and to know the Jeevatma who is subservient, controlled by, supported by God; property of God; Sarira to God; and all desired. Having known about the nature of God and soul, he has to entrust all burdens to God and be a non-burdener, as Nammalvar revealed as follows :

“Kalaivai thunbam kalayadozhivari Kalai kam matrilen” (5.8.8, Tiruvoymozhi).

Hence this is called Drptaprapatti explained by Pillai Lokacharya

Vedanta Desika also elaborately discussed about these two types of Prapatti in his Rahasyatrayasara. They are Aarthaprapatti and Drptaprapatti. This categorization is dependent on the feeling and urgency felt by the Prapanna for attaining Moksha. A Prapanna is one who followed prapatti as a Sadhana for attaining Moksha. The Prapannas are classified into Aarta Prapannas and Drpta Prapannas, depending on the intensity of their feeling and urgency for attaining Moksha. Some Prapannas cry for immediate liberation because they cannot brook any delay and separation from God. These Prapannas are called Arta Prapannas.

The other kind of Prapannas request the Lord to grant Moksha at the end of their life time or even after death and they are called

Drpta Prapannas. Now this classification gives rise to a question namely, why should there be a distinction between these Prapannas concerning the time of attainment of Moksha?. The distinction between these Prapannas arise due to the differences in their prayers addressed to the Lord which inturn is due to their Prarabdha Sukruta or meritorious deeds of their previous life. He gets the happiness of devout worship of the Lord till he gets Moksha, as he attains the same happiness of serving the Lord for all time to come, being ride of all his Karmas in Moksha. Hence the classification into Aarta and Drpta are made depending on the intensity and urgency of the Prapanna's feeling. But there is absolutely no difference in the nature and enjoyment of Moksha for both types of Prapannas.⁷⁷

Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika in their works explained the nature and significance of Saranagati in the form of Mantras or Rahasyas. This is being explained in the next chapter.

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THREE SUPREME MANTRAS OR RAHASYAS IMPLYING SARANAGATI

The significance of three Rahasyas are great in Sri Vaisnavism. The three Rahasyas are : Tirumantram or Moola Mantram or Astakshara Mantra and Dvaya Mantra and Charama Sloka. When we trace the origin¹ of these great Rahasyas, it is said that Sriman Narayana preached the Moolamantra i.e. ‘*Om Namo Narayanaya*’ to Nara in Badrikasramam, now situated in the peak of the Himalayas; Further Lord Vishnu preached Dvayamantra to His Consort Mahalakshmi (Piratti) in Vishnuloka as foollows :

*Sriman Narayana charanow saranam prapadye,
Srimathe Narayanaya Namaha*॥

and Lord Krishna preached Arjuna in the war front in Kurukshetra the Charama Sloka as follows :

*Sarvadharman parityajya Mamekam Saranam Vraja ।
Aham tva sarva papebyo Mokshayishyame Masuchaha* ॥

The Moolamantra is called ‘Mantrarajan’ (king of Mantras) since this Mantra is secret in nature; hence it is called Mantra Rahasyam. in Pancharatra Sutra Dvayamantra is called ‘Mantraratnam’

(Diamond among Mantras) and this is practical in nature and hence it is called 'Anushtana Rahasyam'. It is said that since Dvyamantra enlightens the meaning of Tirumantra, it is called Mantraratanam^{1(a)} Charamasloka is called 'Vidhi Rahasyam', as Lord Krishna ordered Arjuna to do His Dharma. The Moolamantra embodies the wisdom of all the scriptures. This is the most preferable Mantra to be adopted in the practice of Saranagati Vidya. Dvayamantra is an elaboration of Moolamantra. It not only bestows happiness, but also a tool for attaining the ultimate goal i.e. Moksha. The Charama Sloka is a detailed presentation of Moolamantra. This Mantra grants intuition and fortifies the aspirant to adopt Saranagati Sadhana. Therefore, this Mantra is also known as poshaka or tonic that helps to attain Moksha.

Greatness of Moolamantra

There are two forms in usage of Tirumantra. They are Vedic and Tantric form :

Vedic forms : OM NA MO NA RA YA NA YA

Tantric forms : NA MO NA RA YA NA

According to scriptures, Pundarika an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu was initiated with Moolamantra by Saint Narada, Pundarika received it with supreme faith and meditated the Mantra with undivided concentration and attained Moksha. In Varahapurana, it is stated that Nampaduvan who was born in low caste realized God through the utterance of this supreme Mantra without the prefix 'OM' as well as suffix 'AYA' i.e. just by saying 'NAMO NARAYANA'. Naradiyam points out, that of all Mantras this Mantra describing Bhagavan as the Supreme i.e., the three Vyapaka Mantras² are the greatest, so also the great Moolamantra.

It is sacred of all Mantras, of all secrets this is the greatest secret, of all things that purify, this is the most purificatory.³

The Moolamantra is the essence of Vedas. It has the potential to remove all impediments that an aspirant may encounter with and grant him all the worldly objects. Pillai Lokacharya observes that this Mantra will grant Isvarya (wealth), Kaivalya and Bhagavallabham (Kainkarya to Lord in Paramapada) as explained in his work 'Mumukshupadi'.⁴ The Moolamantra is like a Brahmastra which does not allow to practice any other Mantra along with it. The Purvacharyas like Sriman Nathamunigal, Yamunacharya, Ramanuja and his disciples have enlightened by this great Mantra.

The Moolamantra consists of three words and totalling eight syllables. The three words 'OM' 'NAMO' and 'NARAYANAYA' gives essentials of both Lord and Jiva. The word 'OM' refers Brahman as a cause of universe; 'Namaha', refers that Brahman as upaya; 'Narayanaya' means Brahman who is supreme upeya. In other words 'OM' refers to Seshatva (servitude to God); 'Namaha' refers to Parathantriya (negation of individuality); and Narayanaya means Kainkarya.⁵

The Moolamantra can be chanted either with or without first syllable 'OM' and can offer the same fruits that could be offered by the practice of other Mantras. Naradiyam questions, of what use of are the many virtues? When the Mantra 'NAMO NARAYANA' confers all the boons that may be desired.⁶

The Moolamantra can be recited either in Vaidika form or Tantric form. The Brahmins should chant this Mantra in Vedic form, whereas Kshatriyas can chant either in Vedic or Tantric form i.e.,

OM NAMO NARAYANAYA or NAMO NARAYANA. On the other hand, the Vaisyas and the Sudras should chant this Mantra only in Tantric form. Besides this main Mantra, there are other Mantras in Shadakshara and Dvadasakshara forms to praise Lord Vishnu in the way of 'OM NAMO VAISHNAVE' and 'OM NAMO VASUDEVAYA' respectively. However these two Mantras are incomplete and they won't give full aspects about the Lord as found in Moolamantra. The Moolamantra can be practised by women, but without the opening syllable 'OM'. Thus Moolamantra can be practised by all people irrespective of caste, creed, colour and gender. Chanting the Moolamantra once is equal to the frequent refrain of all the Vedas. Naradiyam informs us that 'what fruit is gained by the people who utters the Rig, Yajur and Sama Vedas many times - that fruit is gained by the aspirant who utters the Moolamantra only once'.⁷ I wish to explain to some extent each word of Tirumantra according to Purvacharyas commentaries.

Supremacy of Pranava 'OM'

According to Manusmṛti, Pranava or the Veda consisting of three letters, existed at the beginning, and the three Vedas Rig, Yajur and Sama were within it in 'A' U and 'M' respectively.⁸ This Mantra should be kept secret. One who understands this Pranava is called Vedavit - means 'a person who knows the three Vedas'. The Brahma Vidyas consider the 'OM' to be independent and refers to Bharasamarpana, Atmasamarpana and Phalasamarpana. This syllable is also helpful in realizing Jiva to be as a part of God i.e. Seshatva (servitude to God). The constant meditation of 'OM' helps the Jiva to gain self-control and peace

of mind. This kind of mental harmony makes Jiva pure and eligible for attaining Moksha.

Generally the word 'OM' can be divided into 'A' 'U' and 'M'. These three letters can be pronounced in a single unit of time or in two or three or three and a half units of time. Accordingly meanings of these letters differ depending upon the time taken for its pronouncement. When 'OM' is uttered in a single unit of time, it means Brahman with earth as His body; when it is uttered taking two units of time, it means Brahman with Antariksha the middle air or sky as His body; when uttered in three units of time, it denotes Brahman with the world of Svarga as His body; three and a half units of time represents Brahman the pure and ultimate cause (of everything).⁹ The Sastras advocates the utterance of 'OM' in any one manner but not separately as 'A' 'U' and 'M'. Pillai Lokacharya says that these alphabets (A, U, M) were taken from three Vedas i.e., Rig, Yajur and Sama like butter is produced by churning the curd from three vessels.¹⁰ Hence it is the gist of all Vedas.¹¹

The Meaning of 'A'

'A' is the first letter of Pranava 'OM'. It is an inherent part of the eight syllable Mantra and denotes Brahman. Just as the letter 'A' is the origin of all words, Brahman is the origin of all things denoted by these words. Therefore the letter 'A' denotes Bhagawan. He is denoted by that letter. This relationship between the letter 'A' and Bhagavan is seen from the meaning to be appropriate.¹²

Ramanuja in his Vedartha Samgraha states that the 'OM' syllable is the matrix of the entire Veda and the 'A' is the matrix of the 'OM' syllable. The Veda - a transformation of the 'OM' syllable - is dissolved in the 'OM' which is its own matrix, and the 'OM' being a transformation of the 'A' is dissolved in the 'A' which is its own matrix. Further it is very clear that 'A' is the matrix of all denotative words and that Brahman is the matrix of all things denoted by words.¹³ Thus it can be concluded that Brahman is be-all and end-all of this universe. It means that, God is Omniscient and Omnipotent.

'Ava' the verbal root for the letter 'A' means - protection. Though the root 'Ava' has various other meanings, its aggregate meaning is 'to save'. According to Pillai Lokacharya protection means that He (God) protects the created things in all forms by entering within them beneficially like water in relation to crops.¹⁴ Further He denotes the essence of 'A' as pitha - putra Sambanda (Father - son relationship) and the essence of 'Ava-rakshana' as Rakshya Rakshaka Sambanda (protector-protected relationship).¹⁵

The meaning of fourth case ending added 'A'

Pillai Lokacharya in his Rahasyas established the relation of soul with that of Lord as a Sesha which can be derived from the fourth case ending added to the letter 'A'. Since the fourth case ending letter 'A' has been dropped as the rule saying that the case endings are dropped in a compound, as it is the contraction of the word Narayana. Hence the soul is subservient to God.¹⁶ Further this subservient (Seshatva) is indeed the essential nature of the soul.¹⁷ The Individual is subservient to God like smell in sandal paste, flowers, betel leaves.¹⁸

The meaning of ‘U’

The letter ‘U’ occurs in between ‘A’ and ‘M’ and serve as a connecting link between Jiva (M) and Lord Narayana (A). Sri Vaishnavism gives prime importance to Goddess Lakshmi who is depicted as being compassionate to Jivatma like a mother to a child and helpful to Lord Vishnu like a spouse. This is underlined by Pillai Lokacharya in his text Mumukshupadi, that Mahalakshmi is like a mother to a child and spouse to a husband in the bed; like wise the first letter ‘A’ and the last letter ‘M’ interlinked with ‘U’.¹⁹ To show an example Pillai Lokacharya cited Yasodha’s service as a wife to her husband Nanda Gopala and as a mother to her son Srikrishna.²⁰ This may be compared with that of an inseparable relation of rays from the sun and smell from the flower.²¹

When a devotee prays Lord Vishnu, Goddess Lakshmi intervenes on his behalf with Lord Vishnu. This reveals Her compassionate nature and inseparable relation with Vishnu. This is a significance in Sri Vaishnava tradition. Hence the letters, ‘A’ ‘U’ and ‘M’ can be interpreted thus : ‘A’ symbolising Lord Vishnu Narayana who is the saviour of all, ‘U’ representing Sri Lakshmi and letter ‘M’ representing Jivatman. Here Sri Lakshmi is seen as a mediator between Jiva and Narayana. Thus Sri Vaishnavism presents Sriman Narayana as always being accompanied by Lakshmi. It is perhaps owing to this reason Ramanuja describes Brahman as Srinivasa in his Sri Bhasya. Vedanta Desika also considers Sri Lakshmi as an embodiment of all ‘Sreyas’ or well wisher of the Jiva. Thus from the meaning of the ‘U’ it is to be said that the soul is only subservient to Lord Sriman Narayana and not others.²²

The meaning of 'M'

The letter 'M' denotes 'Atma' and all other species which are dependent on God. According to Pillai Lokacharya, 'Ma' is the 25th alphabet in Sanskrit language, which represents knowledge and called 'Atma'.²³ Acharyas say that the word 'Aham' should be considered to have an independent status to which 'M' is an adjective. It means - I who am a Jiva or self or 'I' exists not for itself but for the sake of doing service to Bhagawan on account of its inseparable relation with God. Viewed in this prospective, the letter 'M' has no existence for itself but for the sake of 'A' and 'U' or 'AU' or for Sriman Narayana and Sri Lakshmi. Pillai Lokacharya says that 'Atma' is entirely different from body and have a knowledge of God.²⁴ According to Pillai Lokacharya the syllable 'OM' gives the meaning of the relationship between Jiva and Para (Lord Narayana) by citing the hymn Thirumangai Alvar on the deity of Tirukkannapuram (Thirukannan diety), it means 'A' and dropped fourth case ending letter of 'A' and Adeyan (myself) means the servitude of Jiva in 'M'; am I servitude for others ? it shows the negation of Anyaseshatva form of 'U'.²⁵

The Meaning of 'Namaha'

According to Purva Mimamsa, the concept 'Namaha' has three important meanings - (1) I do not belong to myself (2) any activity of mine does not belong to one (3) All these Sesas or Jivas belong only to Bhagavan.²⁶ This amounts to saying that all Jivas are dependent on Brahman alone. The syllable 'Namo' which is chanted while offering prayers to God means 'asking for God's protection'. It also implies the inability of Jiva to protect itself. The word 'Namo' or 'Namaha' means 'to adore' or 'pleasing' and for this purpose it is often chanted while performing yajna. The

elaboration of the word 'Namaha' is that in the syllable 'Namaha' 'Na' means negation, 'Maha' means mine. These words refers to the negation of self and elimination of 'I' or Ahamkara and the sense of mineness (Mamakara). It is well explained in Mumukshupadi by Pillai Lokacharya. It reads thus : "Maha is the sixth case ending on the letter 'M'. It shows that the soul indicated by the letter 'M' is self purposed i.e. Svthantriya, the opposite quality of being for the purpose of another i.e. Iswara. So, it says, 'one belongs to oneself'. The 'Na' indicating negation excludes that. He further says about Ahankara and Mamakara automatically follows and vice-versa. So these negation is highlighted in the word 'Namaha'. When once the soul is free from Ahamkara and Mamakara, the soul is subservient to Iswara, as it is the property of Iswara. So, Lókacharya establishes in the word 'Namaha', 'soul' true nature and its possessions. Lokacharya in Tattvatrya Cit Prakarana says that this subservience is not like that of house, lands, sons and wife that can, among other things, exist independently : but it is like that of the body, incapable of these things i.e. existing and being known independently".²⁷

The words 'Atmasamarpana' and 'Namaha' are equivalent words - means absolute self-surrender at the lotus feet of the Lord. According to Pillai Lokacharya the syllable 'Namaha' means not only the meaning of individuality but also it implies the meaning of subserviance to Bhagavatas i.e. Bhagavataseshatva as quoted by Tirumangai Alvar.²⁸

The meaning of 'Narayana'

Etymologically the word 'Narayana' can be divided into two aspects : (1) Bahuvrihi samsam i.e. 'Naaraha Ayanam Yasya saha'

and (ii) Tatpurusha samasam 'Naaranam Ayanam yaha saha'. Under Bahuvrihi samasa i.e. 'Naaraha Ayanam yasya saha' - means the entire collection of eternal beings that were spoken in the word 'Nara' are supported by God which is known from the word 'Ayana'. Hence it may be said that whose abode is 'Naraha' in Narayana.²⁹ When we want to elaborate this Sutra it is to be known that the Lord's status as a controller i.e. Antaryami in the inner soul of all sentient and non sentient beings. These are Sarira for God who pervades in each of them as Sariri. This is known as Antaryvapti.

When we look into the meaning of Tatpurusha Samsam of the word 'Narayana' i.e. 'Naaranam Ayanam yaha saha' means that God is the abode of the whole creation of both Cit and Acit.³⁰ Further it also means that by being the external pervation (Bahirvyapti) the entire external beings are supported by the word 'Ayana' i.e., God, who is the Dharaka. Nammalvar explains the meaning of the above component parts thus : He who has, as His Seshas countless Jivas with knowledge and bliss as their attributes and with self luminousness as their nature and also His own noble Qualities - that is Narayana.³¹ And Narayana is the Lord of all the seven worlds'.³² This points out that Bhagawan has two Qualities - one is perfection or being defectless and other is possession of immaculate and infinite beautiful qualities. Besides this, the Lord also possesses two different glories or Vibhutas in Him 'Lila Vibuti' or material world where all the sentient things and non-sentient beings that are mortal are present and 'Nithya Vibhuti' which is transcendental, non-sentient and the permanent. According to Pillai Lokacharya, 'Naraha' means the multitude of eternal things such as the sentient and non-sentient beings existing

both in Leela Vibhuti and Nitya Vibhuti, which includes Consorts also.³³ The word 'Narayana' occurs in Varahapurana states : "I created the waters which are called 'Naras' and lay within them. Therefore I am called 'Narayana'".³⁴ Manusmṛti states : The waters are called 'Narayana'.³⁵ In the above statements the word 'water' has references to other twenty three Tatvas.

The word 'Ayana' originated from 'Iyate iti ayanam' means 'that which is pervaded'. It also means that God pervades all as they are all pervaded by Him in order that He may be so. The word 'Ayana' could also be derived from 'Iyate asmin iti' which means the resting place. The Subhalopanished also states that 'Narayana' is the mother, father, Kinsman, friend, abode or resting place.³⁶

Ahīrbudhnya Samhita interpretes the word 'Narayana' as follows: The word Narayana refers to those that are related to Him as His Seshas. They are supported by Him. He enters into all of them to support them. That is why they are called 'Naraha' because they are supported by Nara.³⁷

The meaning of 'Aya'

In the syllable 'Narayanaya,' the fourth case ending 'Aya' means that the Jiva should pray for the Kaṅkaryā (service) in all places, in all times, in all stages and in varieties of ways to the Lord.³⁸ This means that God is protecting the souls as their Head. Thus it is seen in Moolamantra both in its whole and in its parts proclaims that all things have its origin in Sṛiman Narayana only. Sṛiman Narayana is the Rakshaka (Redeemer) of the whole universe and therefore all our thought, word and deed should be dedicated to God only. Among the offerings, the highest would be

the offering of the self, since the self belongs to Him only. Hence, the Moolamantra means that the soul, which is subservient to Sriman Narayana, should not claim its individuality; All Kainkaryas (services) should be done to the supreme Narayana who is Servaseshi. This is the prayer for a soul to pray before the Lord and get the unstinted revelation of his true relationship with God. Thus the Moolamantra explains and elaborates the theory of Saranagati and also prescribe it as a Sadhana to be adopted for attaining Moksha for those people who are incapable of following Bhaktiyoga.

Dvayamantra

Sriman Narayana charanow saranam prapadye |
Srimathe Narayanaya Namaha ||

The first sentence of the Dvayamantra is an elaboration of the word 'Namaha' in Moolamantra, which establishes that Sriman Narayana is upaya for an aspirant who wants to do Saranagati; the second sentence of the Dvayamantra explains the inner meaning of the word 'Narayana' of Moolamantra, which establishes that an aspirant has to do Kainkarya (upeya) in the presence of both Sriman Narayana and His Consort Lakshmi.³⁹

Greatness of Dvayamantra

The Dvayamantra became popular during the period of Ramanuja when he mastered the meanings from his Acharya Periya Nambi in Madhuranthakam near Chennai as well as from the hymns of Alvars. This resulted him to explain the Dvayamantra elaborately in his Saranagati Gadya. At the time of initiation of this Mantra, the aspirant has to prostrate in full before the Guru, thrice by touching his feet with one's head and receive the Mantra

reverentially like a poor man expecting a hidden treasure.⁴⁰ It is said that Manavala Mamuni used to recite this Mantra daily after bath in Srirangam.

Dvayamantra has a prominent place in Dvayavopaniṣad, an additional text appeared to the regular collection of Kathopanishad. It consists of two sentences, called 'Vakyadvaya'. Since this explains the Moolamantra, it has the essence of Mantra. Mantra means repeatedly pronouncing a particular sentence. That repeatedness protects the aspirant. Hence it is called Mantra. Since 'Dvaya' explains the Moolamantra, it is also called Dvayamantra. It contains six words; ten meanings; twenty five alphabets; first sentence contains fifteen alphabets; next sentence contains ten alphabets. Among the puranas, Vishnupurana is called Purana Ratnam; likewise among the stotras, Alvandar stotra is called Stotra Ratnam; and among the Mantras Dvayamantra is called Mantra Ratnam. Having imbibed in the greatness of his Mantra, Vedanta Desika states as follows :

“At the feet of Lord Narayana who is the Lord of all, who is, in everyway and supremely blissful and who is inseparable from Lakshmi and in order that I may obtain the removal of all that is opposed to all kinds of service, in all places, at all times and in all states or circumstances and to receive full and perfect service to them, I, who am destitute of Upaya, surrender the responsibility of the protection of myself with the accompaniment of the five Angas at the feet of Narayana, so that I may not have anything to do for such things as the responsibility for protecting myself.”⁴¹

I wish to explain to some extent each word of Dvayamantra according to Purvacharyas commentaries.

Significance of the word 'Sriman'

In the first word 'Sriman', 'Sri' denotes the name of Periya Piratti (Mahalakshmi).⁴² Although there are several meanings for 'Sri' namely, Lakshmi, Padmalaya, Padma, Kamala and so on, here it means only the first name Lakshmi.⁴³ The word 'Sriman' refers to Lord Narayana with His Consort Lakshmi when He is a redeemer or Rakshaka. In general, 'Sriman' means one who is associated with 'Sri', here it becomes reiterated as a consequence of the pramanas or Srutis which says that Lakshmi is His spouse.⁴⁴ This Mantra is significant because it states the need for worshipping Sri or Lakshmi to one who wishes to attain Moksha. Moreover it describes an important doctrine of Visistadvaita namely, Sarira-Sariri Sambandha. Thus the word 'Sriman Narayana' shows the goal or Upeya and the Sadhana to attain Him.

According to Ramanuja, Dvayamantra strongly recommends an Upaya namely Saranagati as the only way for attaining Moksha. So practising Saranagati is praying earnestly Sriman Narayana who is seen as being accompanied with His Consort Lakshmi to forgive and make unison with Lord. The supreme equality of Bhagawan is mercy and one who seeks Him ardently is sure to reach Him at the time of release of soul from the body. Bhagawan grants Dharsan of Himself to those souls that have spiritually matured by the adoption of Saranagati Vidya. Saint Nammalvar shows a way to attain such spiritual maturity in the following words, "Meditate urgently on the feet of Narayana and His Consort and get a new life".⁴⁵ This shows clearly the Upaya or Saranagati which is described in the first part of Dvayamantra.

Different meanings of the word 'Sri'

The concept of 'Sri is a unique contribution of Srivaishnavism. In Pancharatra Agama, the word 'Sri' has the following etymological meanings :

<i>Sriyate</i>	-	is resorted to all beings;
<i>Srayate</i>	-	to take upon oneself;
<i>Srnoti</i>	-	hears the petitions;
<i>Sravayati</i>	-	one who passes them to the Lord;
<i>Srnati</i>	-	takes away all the impediments;
<i>Srinati</i>	-	one who nourishes the world.

i. The essence of 'Sriyate' and 'Srayate'

The essence of Sriyate is that Lakshmi is resorted to all beings. In other words, Lakshmi on behalf of the aspirant seeks the Almighty to grant him spiritual awakening. In Srigunaratnakosam, it is said that, "When the beloved Lord is not happy with a man who has committed serious mistakes, in order to reform him the Mother (Lakshmi) sayest to Him (God). What is this? Is there any man in the world who has no faults? And persuadest Him by suitable devices to accept the offender by making Him forget (Vismarya) his offences. Therefore art Thou our Mother.⁴⁶ As shown here, the Divine Mother intervenes and dispell the anger of the Almighty towards the offender. Here 'Sri is responsible and instrumental in showering the Almighty's natural mercy. Thus 'Sri' acts like Divine Mother to the jivas as well as mediator to the Lord. Thus, the essence of 'Sriyate' is resorted to all beings and 'Srayate' is to take upon oneself. These syllables are complement with each other and possess equal functions, as the Goddess is eternal.

Pillai Lokacharya says that 'Sriyate' means that She is worshipped by all, which implies the nature of soul as servitude to Her. 'Srayate' means that She worships the Lord, as Her nature is servitude to God. Hence for the jivas, She is Seshi i.e. Head and for the Lord, She is servitude to Him i.e. Sesha. Thus Sevyatva (worshipped by all) and sevakatva (worships the Lord) are eternal for 'Sri'.⁴⁷ In other words 'Sri' is the recommendatory authority in safeguarding three kinds of jivas i.e. Bhaddhas, Muktas and Nityas by showering Her grace, like wise the nature and action of Sri is 'one is looked after by the grace of Lord'.⁴⁸

ii. The concept of '*Srnoti*' and '*Srayavati*'

Etymologically '*Srnoti*' means 'one who hears the petitions' and '*Srayavati*' means 'one who passes them to the Lord'. When a sinner prays Her, She will persuvade Sriman Narayana to be accessible to him whenever he approaches Him for protection. She hears the lamentation of the sinner patiently, who seeks refuge in Her and She pleads the Lord on his behalf and helps him to live peacefully.

iii. The meaning of '*Srmati*' and '*Srinati*'

The meaning of '*Srmati*' is 'She takes away all the impediments' in the lives of those who have adopted Saranagati as Sadahana for Moksha. Lakshmi Tantra observes, when Bhagawan affords protection, He does it always with Lakshmi, who is the very embodiment of compassion, by His side.⁴⁹ The meaning of '*Srinati*' is 'One who nourishes the world by Her virtues'. On the whole the syllable 'Sri' means that out of her benevolence, She enables Her devotees to attain spiritual maturity which is a pre-requisite for offering service to God. Nammalvar also says as follows : Having

thy grace and the grace of thy Consort who abides in the Lotus, I will sweep the premises of the thy temple.⁵⁰

Vedanta Desika in his Sristuti brings out the idea that Sri is 'Sreyo-murthi' means 'she can grant all the wishes of the aspirants'. Though in Vaikunta, the Lord Narayana is the Supreme Being who accompanied by two Consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi shows that 'Sri' must also be felicitated along with the Lord. Thus the syllable 'Sri' may be interpreted in the following ways as described in Ahirbudhnya Samhita : She dispells all blemishes; generate good qualities in those who are in the world; is attained by all at all times and has herself attained the supreme object of attainment (Bhagavan)".⁵¹ In the other words, the word 'Sri' indicates that Divine Mother who receives our offerings and the verbal root 'Sri' also reiterates the same idea by having the meaning 'service'.

In the present context, 'Sri' is the recommendatory authority for the jivas and eternal at all times, inseperable with Sriman Narayana. She is popularly called 'Purushakara'.

The meaning of the word 'Narayana'

The word 'Narayana' explains all surpassing beautiful qualities of the Lord which emerges by the Purushakara of Sri as those qualities were hidden (unknown) due to the Lord's independency.⁵² The qualities are Vatsalya (affection), Svamitva (Master), Sousilya (good nature), Soulabhya (easy accessibility), Jnana (knowledge), Shakti (power), Praptti (seshitvam) and Purti. Among these, the first four qualities helps the jivas to have easy approach of God and with the other four qualities i.e. Jnana, Shakti and Praptti (seshitvam) and purti (purti means Avaptasamastacamatvam) that the Lord will help the jivas who seeks refuge.⁵³ The first four

qualities are called 'Asrayana Soukaryapadakam' and other four qualities are called 'Asritakaryapadakam'.

Pillai Lokacharya says that the word 'Narayana' stands for Divyamangala Vighraha which is upaya (means) for the aspirants, as the nature of protection and the soul experience of God will reflect in that Divyamangala Vighraha.⁵⁴ Vedanta Desika vividly explains that it is because Narayana is intimately associated with the jivas and has certain great qualities that Lakshmi's intercession proves effective.⁵⁵ Based on the inclination of the Lord, Periyalwar rightly established the magnanimity of the Lord on his devotees in a hymn in his Tirumozhi; i.e., Lord may say to His Consort, that My devotees will never commit offences, and even if they offend, it is only for My glory.⁵⁶

The meaning of the word 'Charanow'

It means the beauty of two feet like the row of two lotuses. Further in the word 'charanow' the meaning for plurality is that another thing than those two will not be entertained, which means that those two feet is only a mean (upaya) and-not other means. Hence completeness (upaya purti) of upaya is established in the word Charanow.

The meaning of the word 'Saranam'

Although there are different meanings for the word Saranam i.e. Upaya, abode and protector, in the context of the first sentence of Dvayamantra it means only 'Upaya'. Here 'Upaya' means 'Istaprapati' and 'Anistanivaranam'. 'Anistanivaranam' means removal of Avidya (ignorance), greedy, dvesha, the actions derived from sins and virtues etc. 'Istaprapati' means accomplishment of Archiradhimarga gamanam, Paramapadaprapati, Paramatma

darshnam and Gunanubhava Kainkarya. By combining the words. 'Charanow' and 'Saranam', Pillai Lokacharya says that it denotes the negation of other means i.e. Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga etc, and establishes that the Lord Sriman Narayana is only 'upaya' for an aspirant.⁵⁷

The meaning of the word 'Prapadye'

In the word 'Prapadye' the syllable 'Pra' means intense or supreme faith and the syllable 'Pad' means supreme confidence or Mahavisvasa – that the Lord will save us when we surrender to Sriman Narayana. But it is equally important to have total faith in the Sadhana of Saranagati also. If the act of surrender is done without any faith, it yields no results. The importance of whole-hearted faith and its necessity were shown in Ramayana wherein the Rakshasas had no confidence in the effectiveness of the Brahma missile (Astra) with which Hanuman was bound. The result was that the Brahmastra which would never fail of its purpose became loose immediately. In the same way, if men had no faith in the efficacy of Saranagati, it would be the same as if it had not been performed at all. Therefore Saranagati gives Moksha soon to those who have total faith in it.⁵⁸

It is difficult to have a whole-hearted faith initially, but in course of time it may be strengthened by God's grace, provided the aspirant has constant belief in God and does not approach the other source of help. Thus Saranagati is like a Brahmastra which yields results of its own without any others intervention. Hence Saranagati is compared to a Brahmastra which won't mingle or tolerate the adoption of any other means along with it, but it yields desired results quickly without any delay. The six Angas of

Saranagati that are also denoted in the word 'Prapadye' are Ankulyasamkalpa, Pratikulyavarjanam, Karpanyam etc. According to Pillai Lokacharya 'prapadye' means 'prostrate' which is derived from the meaning of the root word 'Pada-gathow.'⁵⁹

It is obvious from the above discussions that the Dvayamantra in its first sentence emphasises that Jiva if it wishes to attain Brahman, It has no other Upaya or means, except to prostrate before Sriman Narayana with the recommendation (Purushakara) of Mahalakshmi.

Let us now turn to the second part of the Dvayamantra.

The meaning of the word 'Srimathe'

The word Srimathe (with Sri) shows that when an Individual makes self-surrender, both the Lord and His Consort are the recipients of it. They are the two of whom the human beings are Seshas or parts and to whom we must also render our service. Our object should be to attain Them. This doctrine is also been explained in Lingpurana, Tiruvoymozhi, Alavandar's Stotraratna and in Ramanuja's Vaikunta Gadyam in the following manner :

"Bhagawan, the Lord of the world, is in the glorious world called Vaikunta with Lakshmi".⁶⁰ "Lakshmi whose beauty fascinates even Thee",⁶¹ "Bhagawan who is seated on the serpent Adisesha with His Spouse"⁶² and "The Lord is seated with Lakshmi who is in every way suited to Him".⁶³

Thus the word 'Srimathe' represents Lord along with His Consort to whom we should make our offerings. Further, it is said that when the Lord is a mean, His Consort will be Purushakara or recommendatory authority; likewise when He is the benefactor of

accepting the service of jiva, She will enrich that service by Her inseparability⁶⁴ like Lakshmana who did Kainkarya to both Rama and Sita, the servitude to both is the right way.⁶⁵ It is stated that we have to do service to Lord as cited in Bhattar's Nityam, "Hereafter I should bear in mind the fact of my being as His sesha and render service to Him".⁶⁶

Thus the second part of the Dvayamantra points out two vital aspects namely, (I) the upeya which is Siddha (i.e. Lord Narayana with Sri), the upaya which is Sadhya i.e. Saranagati and (ii) the object of attainment of Sadhya namely, Kainkarya or service.

Meaning of the word 'Narayana'

The word 'Narayana' in second sentence means that the Sriman Narayana is chief of both this world and Vaikunta i.e. Ubhaya Vibhuti – Serva Seshi.⁶⁷ This word has an implication of the importance of the Lord with his body i.e. Divya Mangala Vighraha as well as His good attributes. But here 'Narayana' means that his reigning the both world as well as accepting the service of His jivas i.e. Serva Seshi.

The meaning of 'Aya' in the word 'Narayanaya'

The fourth case ending word 'Aya' in the word 'Narayanaya' means that brightens of Kainkarya to Lord.⁶⁸ Pillai Lokacharya says that since the Kainkarya is eternal, one has to pray daily for the enjoyment of Seshi as well as the eternal nature of soul.⁶⁹

The meaning of 'Namaha'

This is an important aspect in Dvayamantra, wherein this word enlightens the negation of selfishness when doing service to Lord and this spotless service is doing service only to Lord as said by

Goda Devi in Tiruppavai : “Unakke-nam Atchevyom” (our servitude to You only). In other words, the negation of Ahankara and Mamakara when doing service to Lord.⁷⁰

To conclude, the Dvyamantra gives the following theme :

1. Sri - Purushakara,
2. Srimathe - Nitya-yoga,
3. Narayana - Vatsalya etc.
4. Charanow - Divyamangala Vighraha,
5. Saranam - Upaya,
6. Prapadye - Upaya sweekaram,
7. Srimathe - Kainkarya pratisambanditvam,
8. Narayana - Sarva Seshitvam,
9. Narayanaya - Kainkarya,
10. Namaha - Kainkarya Virodi Nivrutti.

When we think the usefulness aspect of Saranagati, Yamunacharya, a disciple of Vadikesari Alagiyamanavala Jeer of the 14th century in his secret sacred work Tattvabhushana states as follows :

- i. Sriman - Anukulya Samkalpa, Prathikulya Varjanam.
- ii. Narayana - Mahaviswasa
- iii. Srimathe - Goptratvavarnam
- iv. Narayana - Atmanikshepam
- v. Namaha - Karpanyam

Thus, these six aspects of Saranagati are fully explained in Mantra Ratnam. In this, the word ‘Saranam’ is called Saranagati. The word ‘Prapadye’ is called Prapatti. The two case sentences

of Dvya is called Dvya. The two case ending words in two references i.e. Srīman Narayana and Srīmathe Narayanaya mean Niksepa or Nyasa. ‘Namaha’ denotes ‘Thyaga’.⁷¹ In this way Dvyamantra has significant importance in Sri Vaishnavism.

CHARAMA SLOKA

*Sarvadharmāṇaṁ Parityajya Māṁ Ekam Saramam Vraja |
Aham tva Sarva Papebhyo Mokṣayishyami Masuchaha ||*

This is the noblest of all Slokas in Bhagavad Gita. The critics and commentators have invested their originality in commenting upon this Sloka and various philosophers maintaining their own point of view, have ploughed the words of this Sloka to plan their ideas in the ample bosom of this great verse of brilliant import. To Ramanuja, this is the final verse (charma sloka) of the whole Gita. Hence, these are the final verses of Lord Krishna to Arjuna in the eighteenth chapter of sixty sixth Sloka of Gita. It is a universal scripture. The implied meaning of this Sloka according to Ramanuja, is that if an aspirant has no capacity to perform Sadhanas like Karmayoga, Jnanayoga, Bhaktiyoga etc., can perform this alternative Sadhana i.e., only the Lord as a means to do Saranagati through Charama sloka. The first part of the sloka states, “Having given up all Dharmas or rites unintentionally surrender to Me alone”. Further, the first sentence explains the thing that has to be done by the doer of Saranagati. The second part assures, “I will release you from all sins and give Moksha don’t despair or grieve not”. In the second sentence, what the things that the Lord will do for the sake of doer of Saranagati is explained. On close observation, it is obvious that the first part of the verse shows that the Lord only as the Upaya or the means to be adopted at times of distress and

the later part explains the fruits of Saranagati. We now deal with the first part of the Charamasloka.

A summary of the meaning of the *Charama sloka*

In Rahasyatrayasara, Vedanta Desika vividly says about Charama Sloka as follows :

“Your knowledge is limited; your ability is insignificant, your life is short and you are also impatient of delay; Therefore do not go about seeking other upayas which you cannot (fully) understand; which you cannot easily adopt and which can bear fruit only after much delay; Realise that I who am easy of access to all, who am the Saviour of all the worlds, and who am endowed with all the attributes essential for a Saviour, am the only upaya and perform the surrender of the responsibility of protecting your self to me with its five Angas. When you have adopted this upaya, you will have done what you ought to do, you will become my ward and be extremely dear to me. Supremely compassionate and gracious, independent and omnipotent, I will, myself, by my mere will and without any other aid, and for the fulfilment of my own purposes, free you from the manifold, endless and insurmountable groups of obstacles without leaving any trace of them. I will enable you to have enjoyment similar to mine own, since you will enjoy myself and all that belongs to me. I will find delight in making you render all forms of service in all places, at all times and in all circumstances - service which will be of the nature of the overflow of the full and perfect enjoyment (of my self) you have absolutely no cause for grief’.⁷²

The first sentence of the sloka contains six words (Sarvadarman, Paritjaya, Mam, Ekam, Saranam, Vraja) and the

second sentence contains five words (Aham, Tva, Sarvapapebyo, Mokshayishyami, Ma, Suchaha)- both comprises 32 alphabets.

Meaning of the word ‘*Sarva Dharman*’

The meaning of the word ‘Dharma’ is ‘the way’ or ‘means of attaining an object’. The way or means is shown in the Sastras. The word Dharman [in plural number] indicates the varied nature of the ways or means of Dharmas. The word ‘sarva’ means ‘all’ which includes the sayings in Sruti, Smruti etc. as follows : Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhaktiyoga, Avatararahasyajnanam, Purushottama Vidya, Desavasam, Tirunama Sankeerthanam, Tiruvilakkuerikkai, Tirumalai edukkai etc. are the things to be done unintentionally. It is suggestive of the Angas or limbs of Dharmas which are referred to by the word ‘all’. But ‘Sarva’ could also be interpreted to mean the opposite of ‘one’ i.e., Anga Dharmas. Another meaning of the word ‘Dharma’ is the absence of qualities like Nitya and Kamya Karmas. The ‘Dharma’ without these qualities would refer to other Upasanas or meditation with accessories like Dharavidya, Sandilya Vidya etc., for attaining liberation. Thus, according to Visistadvaita – ‘Sarva Dharman’ refers to Upasanas or certain Vidyas and not to the duties pertaining to social life. Pillai Lokacharya also underlines that the word Dharma here refers only the Mokshapalasadana in a sutra.⁷³ Commenting on the Sutra, Manavala Mamuni stresses that here Mokshapala sadana means that it contains Bhagavatprapti.⁷⁴ With a view to erasing the wavering mind of Arjuna who considered his duty of war as Adharma, the Lord Krishna says as ‘Dharma’.⁷⁵

The implication of the word ‘*Parityajya*’

The word ‘Parityajya’ mean having given up or renunciation which implies that Saranagati does not require other Sadhanas.

This may give rise to the question, how can the aspirant know his ability to renounce all Sadhanas. Desire develops bondage and renunciation is advocated, though it is not easy to adopt or practice perfectly. The syllable ‘pari’ in Parityajya means extreme dislike or aversion. According to Vedanta Desika “A version in every form” means being without the improper desire to perform what is impossible for a man with the thought : “Though I cannot adopt the upaya in full perfection, I will do it to the best of my ability; when that also is too difficult to perform, I will adopt, in the place of the prescribed Angas, something less difficult or the upayas which will produce the prescribed Upayas”.⁷⁶ Ramanuja has said in his Saranagati Gadya thus : “I see no means of crossing the sea of Samsara in all the eternity of time which lies before me”⁷⁷. When one desires to adopt any Sadhana it is preferable to adopt any easy Sadhana rather than difficult one like Karma, Jnana and Bhakti etc., In such a predicament, “Give up all Dharmas” is an advice to an aspirant who has renounced all other Sadhanas which are unsuitable for practice. In such circumstances alone one can adopt Saranagati. This only goes to prove that Saranagati does not need any other Sadhana along with it.

Pillai Lokacharya classifies the word ‘Parityajya’ under three aspects viz. Tyaga, Laypu and Upasarga. ‘Thyaga’ means not merely giving up the Dharmas; but it means that one has the constant mind in giving up other upayas also as a mean, like thinking the brass as silver or like thinking the particular route which is wrong that one has to go another route.⁷⁸ Manavala Mamuni supplemented that one has to feel for his ignorance of following other means for Moksha though he is the one who desires that Lord is a mean for Bhagavatprapti.⁷⁹ The syllable ‘Layup’ means

that it stresses the giving up of other upayas and practice that the Lord is the only mean Moksha, like the Sastra prescribes that one has to take food only after bath. Likewise one has to practice Saranagati, after giving up all other Sadhanas.⁸⁰

In conclusion, it can be summerised thus : Vidhi or imperative presupposes the renunciation of all Dharmas. To put it differently and more simply the Dharmas that are required for all the other Vidhyas are not necessary for Saranagati. Like for instance : [1] shaving off one's head [2] residing in holy places where Bhagawan is residing [3]wearing the holy thread. In other words, Saranagati does not prescribe the renunciation of any Dharma. Some Acharyas while attempting to explain what is Charamasloka first state what need not be done and then state what has to be done. But all Acharyas are in total agreement that Saranagati can be practised only when he is ignorant of all the other Sadhanas and is fully aware of the relationship between Jivatman and Paramatman. Finally to conclude the following are the implications of Sarvadharmān Parityajya :

1. Inability to perform the duties beyond one's capabilities makes one suitable for adopting the Sadhana of Saranagati.
2. Total ignorance of other Sadhanas becomes a qualification for Saranagati.
3. Giving up all rites or Dharmas becomes an Anga for Saranagati.
4. Non-indulgence in trying to perform what one is not capable of.
5. Being uninterested in doing what one is unable to do.

6. The principle of Brahmastra which states that resorting to use any other accessory or Anga would render the entire attempt a failure.

The meaning of the word ‘Mam’

Pillai Lokacharya lucidly expresses the word ‘Mam’. Mam means the Lord Narayana who is all protector, who responds to Bhaktas prayers and who is the asyalum by unnoticed the mistakes of Bhaktas and who is the constant protector even when Sri who is the mediator complaints about the jiva to help the jiva for unison.⁸¹

Further, the word ‘Mam’ dispels the other stages of Lord i.e., Para, Vyuha and other Devas like Agni, Indra and so on.⁸² Since the Lord Krishna who is the reigner of Dharmasamasthapana, preached Arjuna to vanquish all Dharmas and surrender to Him, as He is the real Dharma (Sakshat Dharma). In addition Pillai Lokacharya says that this word ‘Mam’ directly enlightens the attributes of Lord i.e. Vatsalya, Swamitva, Souseelya and Sowlabhya.⁸³ He beautifully describes Lord Krishna who is having the qualities as follows :

He brings out the dramatic contrast within the image of Lord Krishna, who is both the charioteer, sitting on the chariot with His legs dangling over the edge, His hands holding rein and a whip, and his hair all awry with the dust of the battlefield, and at the same time He is the Supreme Lord who is announcing that He is the ultimate refuge of all men.⁸⁴

Vedanta Desika in his text defines that ‘Mam’ means that the Lord is all saviour by quoting Harivamsa Sloka. That means that Lord Narayana who has the ocean milk as His abode has now

come to the city of Madhura leaving His bed like Adishesha. He also elicits that it means the Lord's inseparable qualities like Sousilya Seshi, His being the Lord of Sri, His being Narayana, omniscience, omnipotence etc.⁸⁵ Each quality is enumerated by quotations from Bhagavat Gita, Lakshmi Tantra, Vishnu Purana, Atmanushastava and so on.⁸⁶

The word 'Ekam'

The syllable 'Mam' in singular offers the same meaning of 'Ekam' means alone. Pillai Lokacharya further means that the word 'Ekam' implies the meaning of negation of the nature or Upaya in choosing Saranagati, as understood in the word 'Vraja'. According to Vedanta Desika the word 'Ekam' represents the fact that Bhagawan is the Ultimate goal of the Jiva and He is at the same time the Upaya for attaining that goal. He is comparable to the Kalpaka tree that has the power of granting all wishes. The usage of the word 'Eka' after the word 'Mam' shows the underlying unity in the ultimate goal of attainment and the means for that attainment. Bhagavatam expresses the same idea in these words, "By all Sadhanas, seek the protection from Me alone who am the inner self of all beings. You will then have no fear of any kind".⁸⁷ Some other Acharyas interpret 'Ekam' in a different way. They are of the opinion that 'Ekam' means 'Chief', 'something other than' and 'there is no other than this'. These could be synonymous with 'no other' and lastly 'only' or 'alone' as the Gita says :

Daivi hyesa gunamayi mamamaya duratyaya |

Mameva ye prapadyate mayametam tarantite || - it means

"Those who seek Me alone [and no other] as their refuge will overcome the insurmountable Maya".⁸⁸ Ahirbudhnya Samhita also says as follows : 'I pray that Thou alone shouldst be my upaya'.⁸⁹

The meaning of the word ‘Saranam’

Though the word ‘Saranam’ has several meanings such as Upaya, abode, protector, taking refuge in and total surrender at the lotus feet of the Bhagawan, here it means ‘upaya’ only because it has to add with the meaning of ‘Sarva..... Ekam’.⁹⁰ This is being underlined in Ahirbudhnya Samhita.⁹¹ This was the prayer that was taught to Arjuna by Lord Krishna. It is applicable to all and Ramanuja has mentioned it in Saranagati Gadya thus, “O Thou that art the saviour of all beings in the world ignoring the differences that may exist among those that seek thee”⁹² and in the utterance of Valmiki, he said, “The great and eminent Rishis say that thou art the refuge and the saviour of those that have sought thy protection”⁹³. These prove beyond doubt that the Almighty is the only saviour for all Jivas. The most essential requisite while taking refuge in Him is that one should not entertain the idea of any other Lord except Lord Narayana.

The meaning of the word ‘Vraja’

‘Vraja’ means ‘choose’ or ‘take to’. It is comparable to ‘Prapadye’ of Dvayamantra because it enjoys self-surrender. In Prapadye the first person ‘I’ is used because it is only a meditation in the mind of a man who performs Saranagati, whereas in the case of the word ‘Vraja’ of Charamasloka, the second person ‘you’ is used because it is addressed to Arjuna by Lord Krishna. To choose the right path, it is the mind to choose the right path by practice. Following the grammatical case, Vraja means by deciding the right path through mind. This is called Jnana Visesham.⁹⁴ This Jnana visesha is also attainable by the grace of Lord as spoken by Nammalvar – ‘Aduvum Avanadhu Innarule’ in Tiruvoiymozhi.⁹⁵

This leads to an intriguing question, does the aspirant have the option of surrendering or not because every soul is bestowed with a 'free will'. So Saranagati is definitely an act of choice, an exercise of free will when it becomes convinced of the Jiva's utter helplessness and feels the necessity of attaining the life's goal namely, Moksha. Does possession of the free-will lead the Jiva to choose the right path for the attainment of the Ultimate goal? Every Jiva is free to choose the path of liberalization. However the right conduct is to seek refuge in Lord because man is helpless. The discerning power must actuate the free will to discriminate between what duties have to be performed and what ought not to be performed.

As seen above, the Charama Sloka consists of two parts. In the first part a particular Upaya - Lord - is suggested for a particular Adhikari. It also enumerates the ways to be adopted by Adhikari to attain Moksha. Hence in the first sentence of this Sloka the following theme is derived :

The negation of all Dharmas intentionally is spoken in 'Sarva Dharman', 'Paridhyajya' means the method of negation, 'Mam' means the Lord as Upaya, 'Ekam' means the negation of other means like Karma, Jnana and Bhakti, Saranam means the nature of upaya. 'Vraja' means the upayasvekaram.

Let us discuss the syllable existing in the second part of the Charama Sloka. In the second part Bhagawan is said to be the saviour who eagerly awaits the opportunity to protect and comfort the aspirant. For this the aspirant must perform Saranagati with wholehearted faith in God. In other words, the second sentence enlightens the doings of Lord Krishna.

The meaning of the word 'Aham'

'Aham' or 'I' is the only source capable of doing the impossible and relieving the evil effects of one's sins. Pillai Lokacharya vividly describes the attributes of Lord Krishna in the word 'Aham' i.e. the Lord (Sarvjna) who is all knower, (Sarvasakti) all Valour, (Praptam) (seshi) chief.⁹⁶ Having given the meaning for 'Aham' by quoting His attributes Lokacharya further states its usage in the present context as commented by Mamuni. Mamuni states that when the Lord wanted to help the aspirant by eradicating his sins and accomplishing his wishes, He realises Arjuna's earlier stage and further what he wants to do with this, the utility of Sarvajnatva and Sarvasaksitva of Lord is known. For the action of His is only for His sake by benefitting by Himself as He is seshi- the relation of Lord. Mamuni includes the attribute of Poorthi (Avaptasamastakamatvam) along with these qualities.⁹⁷ Further, Pillai Lokacharya says that Arjuna feels that Lord Krishna distinguished Himself as a charioteer for his sake and to clear his fear, He emits His attributes in the word 'Aham'.⁹⁸ He underlines that Lord's servitude as charioteer is also the par excellence act of His qualities which are spoken in the word 'Aham'.⁹⁹

The word 'Tva' [Thou]

'Tva' refers to the acquisition of the discerning ability to comprehend the nature of three ultimate Tatvas namely Cit, Acit and Iswara. Pillai Lokacharya says that 'Tva' refers Arjuna (soul) who has no knowledge to know what to do; who has no valour to do what he wants to do; and also has no right to do what he wants to safeguard and who approached Him as a mean. Elaborating the sutra, Manavala Mamuni says that even one has

knowledge to do what he wants and one has valour to act what he thinks, but he has no right to execute it and one who has redeemed all Dharmas and approached Him as a mean. Such is the nature of soul as enlightened in this word.

The word ‘*Sarva Papebhyo*’ [free from all sins]

Eliciting the inner thought of Pillai Lokacharya who has given three Sutras for the word ‘*Sarva Papebhyo*’, Manavala Mamuni classified it into three words as follows : Papam, its multitude and Sarvam - all combined ‘*Sarva Papebhyo*’.¹⁰⁰ Here ‘Sin’ is categorically divided into two aspects. The obstacle for desire (Istavirodhi) and 2. The cause for the evils (Anishtahetu). Here Mamuni means that since this Sloka speaks about Moksha, ‘papam’ denotes the obstacle for desire (Istavirodhi) i.e. the obstacle for the experience of divinity. It is necessary for the aspirant to renounce all evil deeds that lead to Adharma, Artha and Kama which are sinful and not capable of giving lasting joy or bliss. The multiple of sins are as follows : ignorance (Avidhya), past impressions (Karma), Vasana, taste (Ruchi) and matter (Prakruti) are the evil deeds that have to be shunned and they are characterised by the word ‘*Papebhyo*’.¹⁰¹ Manavala Mamuni describes the word ‘*Sarva*’ denotes the aspirant who performs doings unknowingly that accumulates sins who performs daily rituals with fearfulness etc.¹⁰² According to Sruti and Smṛti the evil deeds must be avoided if one wishes to attain Mukti. Tiruvoyamozhi also reiterates the same point. It says : *Sarntha Iruvalvinaikalum janiththu Mayap, pattamuththu theernthu thanpal Manam Vaikka thirutti veedu Tiruththvan* - which means “give up Punya and Papa both of which are of the nature of Karma which are hard to give up”.¹⁰³

It is necessary to assure the anxious Jiva that he would be freed from all sins. Sins could be classified as past, present and future which could be committed either through body or mind or speech. Past sins are sins that were committed before performing Saranagati, present sins are those that are being committed and future sins refer to those that may be committed after the performance of Saranagati.

The word ‘Mokshayishyami’

Pillai Lokacharya says ‘Moksha ishyami’ means that the ‘Lord will grant liberation from sinful life.’¹⁰⁴ Further, he says that in the word Mokshayishyami, the tense ‘Ishyami’ means that neither the Lord will not try for it, nor the aspirant need not pray for eradication of sins; since the aspirant surrendered the God, it will automatically leave him due to fear and not known where it has gone.¹⁰⁵

Vedanta Desika opines that the word ‘Mokshayishyami’ conveys the meaning, “I will grant the liberation or Moksha from this mundane world at the time when you want it”.¹⁰⁶ Liberation means release or freedom from the ties of Samsara. This liberation is possible only if the Individual (jiva) adopts a Sadhana. Further, Vedanta Desika states that, one thinks that he is doing this for his personal end and become sinful.¹⁰⁷ The Lord Himself shows the way for liberation in the following words :

*Sarvakarmanyapi sada Kurvano madvyapasrayah |
matprasadaavapnoti sasvatam padamavyayam ||*

which means, the Karma Yogi, however who depends on Me, attains by My grace the eternal, imperishable state, even though performing all actions”.¹⁰⁸

The syllable ‘Masuchaha’

‘Masuchaha’ means ‘do not feel sad’ or ‘do not despair’. According to Sruti, God will never forsake one who has taken refuge in Him. Once the Sadhana is performed by the individual which in fact is not difficult, it is capable of removing all the obstacles and is having the power to grant the desired goal that is, Moksha. Hence, truly there is no need to grieve or despair. In the words of Bhagawan:

Daivi sampadvimokshasya nibandhayasurimata |
masucah sampadam daivimabhijatosi pandava ||

it means - “The rich qualities that distinguish the nature of the Gods leads to Moksha, the Qualities that make for the nature of the Asuras are the causes that lead to bondage”.¹⁰⁹ Pillai Lokacharya says that ‘Masuchaha’ means that since Arjuna has not entered to do his work and the Lord has involved Himself in this work, there is no grief for ‘Arjuna’¹¹⁰

It is said that there are two more Charamaslokas i.e., Varaha Charamasloka and Rama Charamasloka. During Varahavatara, the Varahamurthy preached two slokas (Vakya Dvaya) to Bhumi Piratti, which speaks the easy way of doing Saranagati when one in calm state of mind, health and action, prays God and unable to sustain his health at the end of his life by unconscious state the Lord will think of him and take him away to His abode. In Ramaavatara also, Rama preached Charamasloka to Vibhishana when he wants to surrender before him, by saying even one who pretends himself as a friend and surrenders him before God, He will take him away to his abode (Moksha).

From the above discussion it is obvious that the three mantras - Tirumantra, Dvayamantra and Charamasloka are the source of maintenance, nourishment and enjoyment to the Jiva and also the cause for Moksha. These Mantras focus Saranagati as a Sadhana for attaining Moksha. It is said that there are two more Charamaslokas i.e. Varaha Charamasloka and Rama Charamasloka. During Varahavatara, the Varaha murty preached 2 slokas (Vakya Dvaya) to Bhumi Piratti, which speaks the easy way of doing Saranagati when one in calm state of mind, help and action, pray God and unable to sustain his health at the end of his life by unconcious state the Lord will think of him and take him away to His abode. In the next chapter, we will study the conduct and duties of Prapanna.

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CHAPTER - V

THE CONDUCT AND DUTIES OF PRAPANNA

Having thoroughly known the significance of three Rahasyas or Mantras as enlightened by great Acharyas like Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika, it is necessary to know how a Prapanna should himself behave in the life time for acquiring the goal to be attained by the grace of Lord. In this, I enumerate some of the points as codified by Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya, Vedanta Desika and other Acharyas for the practice of Sri Vaishnavas.

Prapanna is one who adopts Saranagati as a Sadhana for attaining Moksha unintentionally. After the performance of Saranagati at the lotus feet of the Lord for attaining Moksha, a Prapanna becomes Kratakrtya which means one who has done what ought to be done. After Saranagati, according to Ramanuja, Prapanna should not have any anxiety or apprehensions or doubts regarding the attainment of true knowledge, vision and Kainkarya to the Sriman Narayana. Once Saranagati is performed, God, who is the omniscient and omnipotent will take upon Himself all the responsibilities of Prapanna.

First and foremost duty of Prapanna is that he must cleanse his bodily impurities and also purify his mind by get rid of all evil thoughts. Then only he is eligible to perform Nitya and Naimithika Karmas. He must be friendly and loving to all (including his enemies) and then he has to perform service to God. The Prapanna must have contentment. He must be contented with what comes in his way. He must practice these virtues throughout his life. He must serve God and his fellowmen out of pure love without any selfish motive. Once the Prapanna performs Saranagati, he must not have any concern about himself or even the idea of attaining Moksha.

Who is 'Kratakrtya'? when once an aspirant has performed Prapatti or Saranagati at the feet of the Lord for the purpose of attaining Mukti, he becomes a Kratakrtya.¹ A Prapanna is considered to be a 'Kratakrtya' provided he fulfills the following conditions :

Firstly, the Prapanna should not have an iota of doubt regarding the consequences of Saranagati; He must show no concern whatsoever for all other ends of life, particularly for the other Sadhanas except Saranagati; He must spend all his time in thinking of glories of God and do the duties that are relevant to his position; He must also pray the Lord with Supreme faith and obey His commands; 'He must spend his leisure time by rendering services to God'²; He must not get himself involved in those things that might incur displeasure to God; Though the aspirant may have doubts before performing Saranagati, he must totally eliminate such apprehensions once he has performed Saranagati; He must have irrevocable faith in the benign grace of the God; Similarly, he must not grieve about anything after performing Saranagati. If so, it means

that he has performed Saranagati half-heartedly and so the fruits of Saranagati will be delayed until his faith in Saranagati matures.³

After Saranagati is performed, the Prapanna has nothing else to do but wait for the grace of God. The Prapanna who is caught up in the ocean of Samsara will be safe-guarded by the God out of His kindness. Then the God purifies the Prapanna's Atma and leads him to His eternal abode. All that the Prapanna must show in reciprocation is to have supreme faith in God. Vedanta Desika observes, the Prapanna must have unshakeable faith on God who will pardon all sins and grant him Divine communion as desired by him. With this faith the Prapanna must lead the remaining part of his life.⁴

Varthamala enumerates that to become a Prapanna, every Sri Vaishnava must have to practice the following ways and means:⁵

1. One should not give much importance to his physical body;
2. One should not have much affection towards his relations;
3. One should not imbibe in the beauty of one's physical body;
4. One should not give trouble to the worldly people;
5. One should have acquaintance with the Lord who is an inner soul in his body;
6. One should not take refuge other than Lord Vishnu;
7. One should do Kainkarya to the Lord Vishnu who is the chief to all other deities.
8. One should think of Sri Vaishnavas those who take refuge in the Lord Vishnu as prana and supporter;

9. One should not talk ill of Sri Vaishnavas even playfully;
10. One should not spread the hairs, spitting etc. in the temple.

Specific characteristics of ‘Prapanna’

Pillai Lokacharya states in the begning of his Dvaya Prakarana in a Sutra about the characteristics of a Sri Vaishnava as follows:⁶

1. To detach all attachments of mundane pursuits;
2. To take the Lord as a refuge; As the Lord who is the protector of all;
3. To have faith in getting the attainment of Moksha;
4. To show urgency in attaining the Moksha.

“Koovikkollum kalam Innam kurugatho” as stated by Nammalavar;

5. To spend the day of life by experiencing the attributes of Lord in staying in Divya Desas; This means at the end of life, one can spend in residing in a Divya Desa by experiencing Lord’s Kalyanagunas and doing Kainkarya by the mind, words and deeds; Tirumangai Alvar used to say “Kandiyur Arangam Meyyam Katchi Per Mallai” where he had shown devout intensity of Bhakti;
6. To enthuse those Sri Vaishnavas who preached the above tenets.
7. To have well versed in the Tirumantra and Dvaya;
8. To have Bhakti on Acharya;
9. To show gratitude to Acharya and the Lord;

10. To have friendship with those who have Jnana, Viragya and Santhi.

The Prapanna who wishes to realize ultimate reality should adopts himself to a lifestyle - that is suitable for attaining it. The Prapanna with the help of right knowledge is able to overcome all the difficulties on his way to Saranagati. Vedanta Desika elaborates the characteristics of a Prapanna as follows in his Rahasyatrayasara.⁷

Prapanna should be steadfast in his knowledge, should remain unaffected even when others abuse and insult him because he knows that these abuses and insults can affect only the corporal body and not his Atma which is free from all sinful acts; A Prapanna also realise those people who hurt him because he realises that this world is only temporary and they became the doer of sins; He is grateful to those who realize their own faults openly because such a self-realization frees from all Vikaras and faults; He believes that everyone behaves only in accordance with the actions of their past life (Prarabdha Karma).

The Prapanna should not annoyed at the people who ill-treat him. He thinks that the knowledge he received from their insults and abuses helps him to leave off his Prarabdhakarma. The Prapanna knows the true nature of his soul. For him, the soul is different from the body and mind. He will see that all his actions must be acceptable and agreeable to all. When Prapanna realizes his helplessness, he depends on God and be subservient to Him only. He must have firm conviction that the elimination of evil and cultivation of good are entirely in the hands of God. He also believes that everything in this world happens according to the will and

wish of the God though he may be anxious of his future; He must firmly believe that he will surely attain the Ultimate goal (Moksha) of life through the grace of the God only. Then the Prapanna should not evade the problems that come on his way; He must realize that the problems of his life arise only in accordance with his Prarabdhasukrutās. There is no way of evading it, on the other hand he should have full confidence that God will help him to face all the problems; He should not have fear of anything except the failure to acquire the knowledge of Para-Brahman and also the fear of not being able to serve God well due to the hindrances posed in his way in the form of enemies or mental afflictions caused by Manas, Buddhi, Ahamkara etc.

The Prapanna should place his whole-hearted faith in God and believe that God is his sole redeemer and free him from all dangers and worries. Also, he must not have fear about death. On the contrary, he must welcome it, since it facilitates the prospect of meeting the feet of God and also the possibility of his liberation. Once, he surrenders himself at the lotus feet of the Lord, He takes upon Himself the responsibility of conferring his Moksha by freeing him from the clutches of Samsara. If the Prapanna cultivates these noble qualities, it implies that he is practicing and contemplating the philosophy of Moola mantra, Dvaya mantra and Charamasloka. When such a matured frame of mind is attained, he automatically loses interest on his physical body, since it is not permanent but only an instrument through which all the Karmas of the past life are exhausted. Besides this, he must renounce his worldly attachments either internal relating to his own relatives or external relating to the society.

The Prapanna should not be afraid of this world because he is under the able guidance of God; He must elevate himself to transcend above the transient pains and pleasures of this world. He must love God with one pointed devotion according to his essential nature. These characteristics reveal the pious nature of a Prapanna. Even after the performance of Saranagati, the Prapanna should live and get associated with the people of this world, but he should not get attached to the worldly affairs. His whole aim should be to attain Divine communion and follow the Divine commands. He must devote himself to the service of the God. The great exponents of Visistadvaita philosophy explain this through the character of Sita in Ramayana. Sita told Ravana that he deserved to be reduced to ashes for his misbehaviour but, she did not do so as she has not got permission from her Lord.

The Prapanna declares himself that he is only a self and not a flesh. He is subservient to the Brahman who exists only to save His disciples. Some Visistadvaita philosophers hold the view that Prapanna should follow a line of conduct and character which would give maximum happiness in this very world. He must overcome his grief by contemplating the names of God. True knowledge and wisdom would enable him to practise this kind of conduct. Even a man who is dull becomes intelligent by associating himself with the wise and Bhagavatas, like Muddy water becomes clear and pure by being mixed with the lather from soap nut.⁸ For instance, Alvar Visnucittar became well-versed in Vedas without any rigorous training in Vedas or chanting of the Mantras only by the grace of God who is a promulgator of the eternal Vedas⁹. There were several references of ignorant people becoming knowledgeable and wise purely by the grace of God. Hence, mere

reading of Holy scriptures alone is not enough to get knowledge, but the blessings of God is more important. Hence Saranagati alone has the capacity of granting all our desires, while other Sadhanas promise to give only, when it is practiced in total with much concentration continuously.

The Prapanna should not commit any fault deliberately or absent mindedly. Overconfidence may lead to the transgression of any moral considerations that might incur Divine punishment. But due to all compassionate and ever benign grace of the Lord, a Prayascitta or act of repentance will be suggested. But one cannot evade the Prarabdhakarma. It is inescapable in one's life and at every stage. Even the performance of Saranagati does not guaranteed about the elimination of the Karmas of past life. So also Prayascitta does not mean pardon for the Karmas of the previous life of the Prapanna. God's intention in giving punishments is to purify the Prapanna unlike the punishments of Yama. Yama will not punish the devotees of the Lord Narayana. The followers of Lord Vishnu are unlikely to go to the abode of Yama that is Naraka or hell.¹⁰ Tirumazhisai Alvar also underlines this through a hymn in his Prabandham - Nonmugan Tiruvandadhi.¹¹

General Characteristics of 'Prapanna'

Further Vedanta Desika says that the Prapanna should believe that God is his only Guru and feel happy to perform duties that might please Him. He must deeply convinced that God is the supreme head of this universe and everything is under His control. Therefore, by believing earnestly in his supremacy, he must surrenders his will to God. For this act of surrender there must be 'displacement', which means left emptying. The act of surrender,

by the Prapanna must be whole-hearted, sincere with a choking voice and tear-filled eyes. He must totally identify himself with God and renounce the feelings of agony. He must whole-heartedly realize that there is no other alternative but surrender to God. By this, his ego or Ahamkara is negated and leads a God centered life. He must have no secondary thought in doing service to God at all times and in all places.

He is no longer interested in striving to better his prospects in life. He is interested only in attaining Moksha and that too by the grace of God and not on the basis of his good deeds. Such a state reveals that the Prapanna has get rid of Ahamkara or ego in him. Lastly, he comes to the realization that this world belongs to God and his existence on this world is his lila or play. The absolute and unconditional self-surrender to God is like that of handing over or giving back what belongs to the owner.

The Prapanna must develop himself from his childhood onwards so as to become grace worthy of God. He must mould himself in such a way that he attains the mental maturity for performing Saranagati. Through this, he becomes nearer and nearer to God and grooms himself to the appropriate moment of self-surrender and his mind is free from Rajas and Thamasic gunas. It is advisable to perform Saranagati when the mind is dedicated to God. When the mind rises to the level of Satva dominated Rajas, the self is capable of taking refuge and appreciate Divine grace. It is mentioned that when Prapanna attains this state, he becomes purest and best of human life. Srimad Bhagavatam describes this state of Prapanna as Bhagavatottama 'the best among the Prapanna'. Swami Ranganathananda in his Srimad Bhagavatam

says : “He is the best among the devotees of Hari [God] who sees the blessed Lord as the self in all beings and all beings in the blessed Lord as their self”.

Pillai Lokacharya, in his Navaratnamala, one among the Astadasarahasyas, enumerated the following qualities of a Prapanna or Saranagathan for acquiring the Moksha.¹² They are :

1. One must aware that ‘I’ - The soul is eternal, an atom, possessing knowledge and Ananda; servitude to God and so on;
2. Having known the nature of soul, one has to negate the body which is separate from soul;
3. Further the binding of relatives is to be avoided;
4. Also, to think that the people are enemies for the experience of God as well as to do Kainkarya;
5. Non-worship of Gods other than Sriman Narayana;
6. To think of Sri Vaishnavas who are helpful in enlisting the qualities of an aspirant to know Bhagavatjnana etc;
7. To think about an Acharya who uplifted him from mundane life to useful life of worshipping the feet of the Lord and advised him to do Kainkarya to Lord;
8. Further one has to think Piratti or Mahalakshmi who is the mediator and help the Chetana and through Her Purushakara, in introducing the Chetana to the Lord, who in turn shower His attributes on him;
9. Having acquired ripened knowledge in the unison with Lord through the steps enumerated above, he will think of Lord for the everlasting and eternal Kainkarya to the Lord.

How should 'Prapanna' spend his life in this world?

The Prapanna must lead a spiritual life in this world, because it may be beneficial to him. He must not seek other's help for the sake of his well being. He must prepare himself for serving the Lord in whom he has entrusted the responsibility of his protection.

Vedanta Desika in his *Rahasyatrayasara* has expounded the duties of Prapanna as follows : He must meditate on the auspicious qualities of God in addition to reading the scriptures. He will be convinced of the fact that his responsibility regarding seen and the unseen has ceased, as it has been entrusted to. Lord¹³ He must derive great joy in singing and hearing the great hymns of Alvars. His actions must always not offend anybody. He must not get affected by his failures of the past but depend on God for learning from experience. Following Ramanuja's footpath in expounding the minimum duty to be performed by a Prapanna, Vedanta Desika observes : Firstly, the Prapanna should study Sri Bhasya and propagate the knowledge he got from it. If that is not possible, he must study and recite the works of Alvars. If this is also not possible, he must serve God in temple by lighting the lamps, making the garlands, serving and preparing the food etc. Even if this is not possible for him, he can meditate the meaning of Dvayamantra. Further, if this is not possible, he can seek the well being of Srivaishnavas and spend his leisure time in their company.¹⁴

Further in *Varthamala* also Sri Vaishnava Dinacharitam is well recorded. I wish to purport the same in the following way :¹⁵

1. A Sri Vaishnava has to pronounce daily the Acharya Parampara beginning from Sriman Narayana down to his Acharya; pronounce the Dvayamantra which includes the meaning of Tirumantra;

2. A Sri Vaishnava should reside along with another Sri Vaishnava who has constant faith in the meaning of Dvayamantra;
3. One should not reside with the people who are fully flooded with Ahankara and Mamakara;
4. One has association with Sathvikas and dispense with worldly people;
5. One should not neglect the Sri Vaishnavas who are depending on Lord Narayana as the only mean;
6. One should not help the people although by whom one can get money, fame and status, as they are to be dispensed with.
7. When one praises the other, he should not appreciate or one degrades the other, he should not feel for it;
8. One should not praise himself; all these and so on can be accomplished only with the grace of Lord. Ramanuja also underlined in Gita Bhasya Avatarika about the Bhagavatas i.e., Akrurar and Malakara in Maha Bharatha.

Vedanta Desika says that the Prapanna must constantly praying to the Divine God for forgetting totally this mundane world and his own self. He must devote his entire life in the service of God. He must try to gain spiritual knowledge from his Guru and pray for gaining the knowledge of Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Saranagati. There are certain things which the Prapanna must avoid. They are : firstly, indulgence in the sense - object or Vishayasvadam. Secondly, he should not forget the holy Acharyas who have helped him to gain knowledge. He must be careful and never to speak high of himself. The Prapanna should develop the habit of chanting the holy Moolamantra and Dvayamandtra which help him to

maintain his mental balance and take refuge at the lotus feet of the Lord. He must totally avoid the doing any harm either in thought, word or deed to Brahmavidyas including Saranagati. This is how a Prapanna should behave once Saranagati is performed so as to constantly feel the joy in the company of the ever happy Paramatman from whom he will attain shortly the highest goal of his life namely, Mōksha.¹⁶

How Prapanna should follow the ordinances or testimonies explained by holy Sastras

The ordinances explained by holy Sastras should be followed strictly by Prapanna. Vedanta Desika observes : Till the day of his release from this world, that is, until his death, he must live a secluded life and follow the Sastras because he cannot know what the will of God is¹⁷. Friendship with others in this world is necessary but preferably with spiritual minded people, because such a friendship will develop his Satvaguna. God may not be favourable to those who have association with the spiritually unfavourable people. The Srutis which are the commands of God gives an elaborate account about the conduct to be adopted by Prapanna. God will severely punish the aspirant if he does not follow the Sastras. The observance of Sastras is for preparing the Prapanna for the act or performance of Saranagati. The observances of Sastras are of two fold. The first one is Kamya karma and the other one is Ajna karma. The Kamya karmas are performed according to the injunctions of Sastras, whereas through Ajna karmas the desired results can be obtained. So if Prapanna wants to avoid the wrath of God, he must perform Ajna karmas strictly. As we know Ramanuja gave much importance to the ethical

conduct laid down by Sastras. A Prapanna is therefore, required to follow the ordinances of the Sastras without fail, till the time of his journey from this world.¹⁸

The life of Prapanna becomes gloomy if he behaves against the ordinances laid down by the Sastras. Isavasyopanishad says that the soul-staggers are those who deem themselves to be free and they enter into great darkness. The Prapanna should not be a seeker of mundane pleasures, but a strict follower of Divine ordinances. He must be averse to the pleasures derived out of sense organs. On the other hand, if Prapanna acts according to the will of God as ordained by the Holy Sastras, he will be promoting the glory of God and attain the objects desired by him i.e. Moksha. It is observed that due respect must be given to a Prapanna, whatever caste he may be, like male or female or Sudra or Pancama because of his goodness, whoever serve the Bhagavatas they become very nearer to Bhagawan.¹⁹

How should Prapanna atone for his sins?

Certain questions like, what punishment would be meted to a Prapanna if he commits sins either knowingly or unknowingly after the performance of Saranagati? What course of action should be resorted to in order to overcome the evil consequences? How can he atone for his sins? It is generally believed that after performing Saranagati, Prapanna has no chance of sinning either knowingly or unknowingly because he is under constant protection and guidance of God. His sole ambition is to be relieved from the bondage of Samsara and get rid of all his sins of the past. But this notion is contrary to the consideration of the general theory that as long as the Prapanna lives in the world, he cannot overcome the effects of

Prarabdhakarma. But as a human being, he may have commit some mistakes. Here the predicament that we confront is that Saranagati is objectionable according to the Sastras. So what will be the way out of the Prapanna if he commits mistakes without his knowledge? While explaining the meaning for the word 'Prapadye' in the first sentence of the Dvayamantra, Manavala Mamuni sites the quotation of Ramayana as follows :

*Sakrudeva propannaya tavasmeti cha yachathe|
Abhyam Sarvabhothebyo dadamyethath vratham mama||*
(Ramayana Y. 18.3)

which means that Rama has taken a vow to rescue that one who performs Saranagati only once and one who shows that he is servitude to Him.²⁰ Further, Mamuni states that one who by his Rajasa and Tamas qualities changes to other means (Upayas) and regrets later for his mistake and to wipe out that mistake, he has to do Prapatti, which was once done, will not be considered more than once and considers as effulgence for continuity of his Satvaguna.

In Varthamala, there is a conversation among the Acharyas about the practice of doing Saranagati only once in a life-time or more. Here it is stated that Prapattavyam is the Lord who is the central subject for Saranagati and Prapatta is the jiva who practices Saranagati. The Prapatta, by his desire, surrender himself to Lord only once. But he will pronounce the Prapatti Mantra till he realises the goal, as he commits mistakes knowingly or unknowingly during his life-time. This is compared with that of a man who has thirst for water and having obtained water, he further goes on saying 'water, water' till he quench the thirst. Like that here Saranagati

also once did according to Sastra; Further repeating the same is due to his desire of doing Kainkarya; not as the order for Saranagati.²¹

But he must not surrender his entire responsibilities at the lotus feet of the Lord. Sri Vaishnavism describes God as being ever merciful and so He would never forget his devotees. The God will redeem his devotees until their death. The Prapanna would be made to realize that he cannot incur God's displeasures at any circumstances. Thus, God helps the Prapanna to overcome his mistakes whether he has committed them knowingly or unknowingly.

Vedanta Desika states that the Prapanna will not commit any mistakes knowingly. In case he happens to commit mistakes unknowingly, it will be ignored by God. But if Prapanna commits mistakes knowingly, he must offer Prayaschitta or penance to obtain pardon, otherwise God will definitely punish him in this present life in some way or the other. He may loose sight or become lame or have disobedient children and the like.²² After undergoing Divine punishments, the Prapanna can attain the Ultimate target of life namely, Moksha. The Lord expiates sins in the form of punishments, and afterwards, certainly takes the Prapanna to Himself.²³

The Residence of *Prapanna*

The Bhagavad Sastras deals elaborately about the importance of conducive atmosphere to a Prapanna. The environment should not disturb while Prapanna offers prayers and meditating upon the God. The appropriate place for the Prapanna would be where sincere Srivaishnava devotees resides because such a place can promote his interest in doing Kainkarya to God. The holy place where Bhagawan Sri Krishna resides in the form of Arcavatara is

a suitable place for Prapanna to reside. That holy place becomes sanctified by the presence of God and also His devotees. According to Vedanta Desika, that place has the power of purifying the mind of Prapanna. Hence such a holy place is the most desirable place for a Prapanna to live and cherish God.²⁴ The next choice would be the place, where God and Prapannas lived together which has the power of promoting Satvaguna. It would also facilitate a continuous association with noble souls who are exclusively devoted to worship Sriman Narayana. By doing so, the Prapanna may not in anyway be deprived of the joy of Divine communion and company of the holy men. That is why it is said that attaining Moksha is also dependent on the place where a Prapanna decides to reside. The holy places sung by Alvars i.e., 108 Divya Desas are also suitable for Prapanna to live and offer his services to God according to Sri Vaishnavism. Another argument is that Moksha has nothing to do with the place of his residence, for salvation it is assured to Him at the very moment of his Prapatti or Saranagati.²⁵ It is also argued that any place is fit for Prapanna's habitation, where Srivaishnava Satsangam flourishes.

The routine duties of *Prapanna*

Ramanuja's prose work Nityagrandam or Nityam deals with daily routine duties of a Prapanna.²⁶ It is otherwise called ethics of Saranagati. The daily duties of Prapanna are five-fold (Pancakala-niyamas). They are : [1] Abhigamana or initial stage for worship of God, [2] Upadana or collection of materials for God's service, [3] Ijya or making ready for God's Dharsan, [4] Svadhayam or reciting of Bhakti literature and Holy Vedas [5] Lastly, Yogam or taking refuge at the lotus feet of the God; These

Kalakrutyas of five fold duties should be started by 4.30 a.m. or Brahmamuhurtha and to be ended at 10.00 p.m. The nature of these duties are elucidated below :

Abhigamana or the first duty of a day

This is a preparatory stage for worshipping the Lord. Abhigamana ordains that Prapanna should wake up from his bed in Brahma-muhurtha by uttering the Lord's name Hari. Then with a sweet voice, he must chant the 108 names of Lord Vishnu in Sanskrit that praise the Lord's grace and all encompassing nature. The Prapanna may start his duty by praying the God and renouncing all worldly desires. This is to be done while he is in bed and also remember that there is no chance of attaining Moksha without the grace of God. The Prapanna who is Akinachnya or in helpless condition need not fear about his Prarabdhakarma of past life, because he has already surrendered himself to God. Thus from arising bed, the Prapanna should offer his prayers and surrender all Karmas and fruits of his good deeds to God. He must also be firmly determined to do only that which pleases the God and avoid all that might displease Him. When he wake up from the bed, he must chant the mantra 'Om Namo Narayanaya' and place his right foot on the floor. This is the first and most important of the five - fold duties.

In Abhigamana one's morning duties (Malamutra visarjana) also have to be performed with the words of salutation to Bhagawan. The Prapanna should ease himself in a clean and neat place. He must sit in the northern direction during day time and southern direction during night time. He should avoid talking with anybody or seeing sacred objects while he is in the process of

Malavisarjana. All these precautions have to be taken so that the Prapanna will be free of bodily impurities before surrendering to God.

Cleaning of body is described elaborately in order to emphasise the purity or cleanliness of the body organs. One must exercise sipping of water three times by uttering twelve names of God and clean the mouth organs by rinsing with water three times. While performing Acamana or sipping of water, the Prapanna must sit in a clean place after bringing the two hands in the middle of the two legs and maintain strict silence. He must do this by facing the eastern side in the morning and western side in the evening. In case water is not available, the Prapanna can perform the duties by touching the right ear which implies the preparation for Abhigamana.²⁷ He must shape his right palm like a cow's ear and touch the water with his left palm. Then he must take a small quantity of water with his right hand and recite the names of God like : Om Achuthayanamaha; Om Ananthayanamaha; Om Govindayanamaha; Om Kesavayanamaha; Om Madhusudayanamaha; Om Vamanayanamaha; Om Trivikramayanamaha; Om Padmanabhanamaha; Om Damodaranamaha; Om Rishikesayanamaha; Om Vishnavenamaha, Om Sridharaya namaha and swallow a small quantity of water after recitation of each name of the God. After physical bath, he must put his used cloths by his right side preferably. Then he must utter the Moolamantra which is nothing but a nutshell of Saranagati. There is a systematic procedure for washing and drying of used clothes. After the bath is over, the Prapanna must get ready to go to the temple. On reaching the temple door he must sit either in the eastern or with northern side wearing a ring made out of Darba which is known as Pavitram.

Srivaishnavism always compels that every Prapanna must have on the forehead Urdhvapundram. Of these three lines, two extremes are in white colour drawn with a scared mud and the central line is drawn with Srichurnam. This Urdhvapundaram must be worn twelve places in the body including the forehead. The Prapanna then stand in front of the Lord's idol and recite the sloka 'I take refugee in Govinda who is the colour of the moon. I surrender to Madhusudhana who is a colour of the lotus' etc. these recitations must be done by sitting in a clean place of a temple vicinity on the seat made of Darbas facing in the east direction. Then he must chant 'Om Namo Narayanaya' for twenty times and then perform Pranayama and take refuge at the lotus feet of the Lord. Then he must go to Sanctum Sanctorum with supreme faith and devotion. He must prostrate before God with his head bent down and hands folded. After this he can leave the sanctum sanctorium by uttering the names of God. Then he should sit in the temple premises for a short time practising Pranava mantra. Another thing he must keep in mind is that he must dress neatly while visiting the temple he should also utter the meaning of the Dvayamantra revealed by Saranagati Gadya.

If Prapanna has no time to perform Abhigamana he can prostrate at the feet of the Acharya or Guru. The Acharya or Guru takes upon himself the responsibilities that enabling the Prapanna to attain Moksha.²⁸ If Prapanna has no capacity to do this, he can very well utter the Moolamantra, i.e., 'Om Namo Narayanaya'. If even this not possible he can perform Abhigamana in his mind and heart.

Upadana or the second duty of a day

The second duty of a Prapanna is to collect the commodities necessary for prayer to God or Bhagavadaradhana. All kinds of materials have to be collected for service to God. Fruits and flowers must necessarily be offered to God and they must be brought from a clean and neat place only. Butter milk, ghee and milk must also be offered. The flowers offered to God must be grown in a clean and neat place. Tulasi or Bilvam leaves find a special place in the offerings. The Prapanna must not collect flowers or any other offering given by prostitutes or Nastikas.²⁹

The flowers must be collected in a particular pattern. The Prapanna should not pluck flowers on new moon day or full moon day or in night or in afternoon and at the time of performing Sandhyavandanam. If he plucks flowers on these days or at these times, it amounts to giving thuds on the head of God. While collecting and offering these items, they must be done by uttering the word Achyutah priyatam. In case the Prapanna is not able to collect the above said items for God, it is enough if he can spend time with Srivaishnava scholars by learning holy scriptures or hearing holy stories narrating about the sport of God.

Ijya or the third duty of a day

This is a faithful work offered as a service to Bhagavan. That is why Ijya is known as Bhagavadaradhanam. The first stage in Ijya is Bhutasuddhi or cleaning of elements. Firstly, the idol in the sanctum sanctorum is cleaned and simultaneously the Mantra 'Srimate Narayanayanamaha' must be recited. Then incense and light must be shown to the idol. Next comes the offering of Bhojanam of good dishes to the God with deep faith. While making

this offering he must chant the eight lettered Mantra 'Om Namo Narayanaya'. A portion of food must set aside and be given to Acharyas and to Srivaishnava devotees.

If Prapanna has to dine in other houses he can do so after performing Nivedanam in mind and soul. The Prapanna must eat only a portion of food that is offered to God. Even while eating, he must not stand or touch others or speak to people of Tamasic nature. He should wait till others finish dining.

Svadayam or the fourth duty of a day

This duty consists of reading of Itihasas, Puranas Gita, and other Grandas etc. This may be done in the afternoon after taking lunch. All this is to be advocated so that the Prapanna understands the relationship between Jivatman and Paramatman. He can read the Upanishads, Ramanuja's Sri Bhasya and other devotional literature. He must know thoroughly the implied meaning of Pranava mantra. His leasure time also can be spent in discussions with Srivaishnava scholars. The Prapanna should read Itihasas like Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Bhagavad Gita. If Prapanna is not able to read the above devotional literature, he can atleast recite the holy names of the Lord. He must perform Sandhyavandanam in the mornings and Sayamvandanam in the evenings. He should go to temple in the morning and evening and offer Nivedanam to God with eatables prepared for the night. The central idea of Svadayam is reading the devotional and Saranagati literature.

Yoga or the fifth duty of a day

The fifth and the last daily duty of Prapanna is to visit the temple and perform Saranagati by making self surrender at the

lotus feet of the Lord. While performing this he must prostrate before God, placing his head at the feet of the God and surrender unto Him. While doing this, he must concentrate on God in thought, word and deed whole heartedly. It is necessary that he must realise that Sriman Narayana is Sarvaseshi, Cetana is Sesha. This Sesha-Seshi bhava is necessary for Paramaikanti.

All the above described duties are meant for the spiritual upliftment of Prapanna. The first duty Abhigamana is preparing Prapanna for worshipping God. The second duty, Upadana is for gathering the commodities necessary for God's worship. The third duty namely, Ijya states the procedure of worshipping the Lord and the procedures to be adopted while taking afternoon lunch. The fourth duty is Svadhyam explains the type of devotional and Saranagati literature that Prapanna has to read and the fifth duty is Yogam which is none other than the ways to be adopted while making the act of Saranagati at the lotus feet of God.

If one is not in a position to perform these five Karmas, he can do any one of them. For an aspirant Ijya is important which means Bhagavadaradanam. 'Ijyayevathu Kevalam' is the ancient version. Or else, one is practicing either Svadhyaya or yoga, that itself considered as five Karmas. For a disciple who respects Acharya, Acharya Aradanam considered as five Karmas or for a disciple who worships Bhagavatas, Bhagavata Aradanam is considered as five Karmas.³⁰

The Sadhaka who follows Saranagati as a Sadhana to attain Sadhya (Moksha) is called Prapanna. On the contrary, if a Sadhaka adopts Bhakti as a Sadhana to attain Moksha, he is called Bhakta. Are Bhakti and Saranagati are identical ? Are they different? Is

Saranagati is superior over the other Sadhanas ? These questions will be dealt in the next chapter.

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BHAKTI AND SARANAGATI

It is believed that Sri Vaishnavism, gives equal opportunity to every man, woman and child to attain Moksha through Bhakti and Saranagati and is a most democratic and liberal of all religions. When we trace the genesis of origin of Bhakti, one can easily know that in ancient times people pray the natural Gods like Sun, Moon, Agni when they experience suffering for the existence in the life. Times rolled down, the concept of Bhakti has changed into several levels, according to scriptures. People inculcated Bhakti by worshipping deities in various temples. Until the emergence of Sriman Nathamunigal during ninth century, there were disorder in the approach of Bhakti movement. However, the Alvars who flourished during sixth and eighth centuries, built a base for the development of Bhakti through their hymns.

To uplift the inner lore of these hymns and to unearth the themes of Bhakti, Acharyas emerged during ninth century. Sriman Nathamunigal, was the first Acharya who identified the easy way of Bhakti from the hymns of Alvars and established a permanent foot for the growth of Bhakti. His acumen was captured by his

grand son Yamuna who sparked the theme of Bhakti through his works, particularly Gitarthasamgraha and Stotraratna.

In Visistadvaita, there are three ways to realise God. They are Tatva, Hita, and Purushartha. Tatva means the Brahman who is realised by a mean, which is called Hita and taking him as refuge to attain the Purushartha. Hita means Upaya or mean. Sastras showed the way to attain Moksha through Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. Pillai Lokacharya further adds Purushottama Vidya, living in Divya Desa, Tirumantra Sankeerthanam, lighting lamp in temples, and so on.¹ Karma Yoga means performing one's Dharma which sprang into doing Nityakarmas without expecting any benefits and merely doing for the sake of Bhagavadaradana. Karma Yoga is inevitable for Bhakti. Isavasyopanishad says :

*Vidyam Cavidyam ca yas tad vedobhayam saha |
avidyaya mrtyum teethrva vidyamrtam asnute ||.*

which means He who knows both Vidya and Avidya, over comes his sins by Avidya and attains immortality by Vidya². Jnana Yoga means that after doing Karma Yoga one who dispels Tamasic and Rajasic qualities and practices Satva Guna. Yamunacharya says that "ubhayaparikarmita swanthatasya ekantikathyanthika Bhaktiyoga labyaha" which means that by some one whose inner faculty has been prepared by Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga.³ Bhakti Yoga means that by practicing Karma and Jnana Yogas, one who performs Dhyana without any break like continuous stream of oil, which leads him, equal to have inner Darsana of Lord, which elevates his Bhakti otherwise called Bhaktirupapanna jnana.

It is said that Alvars got a special grace of Lord, which was granted without expecting any amount of Bhakti by Alvars. Only

as a special and excellence Vatsalya of Lord showered on them His grace. This Bhakti is also classified into three. They are Parabhakti, Parajnana and Parama Bhakti. Para Bhakti means knowledge of longing for Darsana of Lord; Parajnana means experiencing the Lord inwordly; Paramabhakti means that although inwordly experiencing, one who wishes to embrace Him outwordly by seeing in person. While writing commentary on Ramanuja's Saranagati Gadya, Sudarsanasuri mentions that Para Bhakti is the cause for Parajnana, which in turn is the cause for Parama Bhakti. Thus, these three grades of Bhakti are similar to the Bhakti that was experienced by first three Alvars of Vaisnavism namely, Poigai Alvar, Bhudath Alvar and Pey Alvar.

These three grades of Bhakti one can see in Nammalvar's Divya Prabandham. Para Bhakti from Tiruviruttam to Tiruvoymozhi tenth decad 8th centum; Para Jnana-in Tiruvoymozhi 10th decad 9th centum; and Parama Bhakti in the last centum i.e., "Muniye Nanmugane" (10.10). While explaining the nature of Bhakti and its role as a means of Moksha, Ramanuja, in his text Vedartha Samgraha say that one who do good thing without expecting any benefit, his sins done in the past births will be wiped out. That aspirant will acquire freedom from wordly attachment and Bhakti towards God. This is explained in Bhagavat Gita (VII. 14) "The most wonderful Maya (Veil) of Mine consisting of three Gunas (modes of nature), is extremely difficult to break through, those however, who constantly adore me alone are able to cross it". He will do Angaprapatti. By doing this, he will get God's love. This leads him to take refuge at the feet a learned Guru who will preach Sastras. He will get profound wisdom. This enables him to absorb clearly the earlier knowledge acquired through Sastras. Thus he

will engross to know about the true nature of soul as well as of others. Thus, when we look into the texts, one can know the development of Bhakti at every stage.

Bhakti in Vedas

Vedas are the perennial source of the origin of Bhakti. The Vedic religion is expounds the philosophy of Bhaktiyoga. The Vedic hymns are pregnant with feelings of great love and reverence for God. In Rigveda it is pointed out that consciousness of love and reverence to God is the only means of progress of man in the sphere of sacrifice expressed in the hymn “*Namo Baranth Yamsi*”⁴ – The Vedic hymns also prescribe love as the surest means for attaining godhead. It is declared in the Rigveda, that God is the Father, Mother, Brother and so on.⁵ This is also explained in Subhalopanishad (16) as follows : “*Mata, Pita, Bratha, Nivasaha, Saranam, Suhruta Gatihi Narayanaha*”⁶;

Here God is proclaimed as be-all and end-all to man and he must choose God, the omniscient to lead him, to the realization of his target namely, Moksha. Ramanuja in his Saranagati Gadyam says that, in the absence of the culture of faith and devotion the realization of the highest Reality cannot take place⁷. In Vedas, the Karmayoga accomplishes its purpose when one follows it with love, service and reverence to God. Thus complete faith, guidance and highest love to God are the chief motivating forces for the sages for attaining all aspirations both spiritual and mundane.

Upanishadic thought on Bhakti

The Upanishads lay emphasis on meditation of Brahman as the only way to attain highest pleasure. It gives prime importance

to the whole-hearted concentration of the human mind with love and devotion on the Divine Reality. Such an instinctive realization of God is the common feature in Bhakti and Jnana. Life-long concentration on God can be called Bhakti. According to Sandilya-sutras, Bhakti is defined as the most urgent and sublime attachment towards God or Paramanurakti. According to Narada Bhakti Sutras, Bhakti is encompassing love or Paraprema of the divine God. To cite another reference for reinstatement from Naradabhakti Sutras, Bhakti is “Manogatinavicchinna parun premaparipluta abhisandhivinir mukta” which means – inclination of mind and heart’s love for God. The Vedana, Dyana, Upasana expound the Bhakti as the real intuitive experience of reality all our Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga lead to this loving vision of God. This is the great Hita or highest good of human life. Experiencing God’s love is the supreme and greatest experience in the human life although it is beyond description⁸. Purushasukta says as follows:

*Tamevam Vidwan amruta iha bhavati |
nonyah pantha ayanaya vidyate ||*⁹

which means that He who mediates on Brahman in this manner attains immortality. There is no other way for salvation (Moksha). Tattiriyopanishad also underlines that: “Ya enam viduh amritas to bhavati” it means those who meditate on Brahman becomes immortal¹⁰. Taittiriya Aranyaka says that the person who meditates on Brahman attains the supreme and He who mediates on Brahman becomes Brahman¹¹.

In the Mūṇḍakopaniṣad, it is said that He can only be grasped by meditation that takes the form of Bhakti, not merely by knowing. All these Upanishadic verses command Dhayana only¹². Ramanuja

says that Dhayana admixed with devotion is called Bhakti. While explaining the above Upanishadic verses, Ramanuja says that true meaning for this Sruti is that Dhayana with devotion leads a mean for Moksha.

Bhakti has been described in several ways. Bhishma, the great warier of Mahabharatha, Bhakti is the attachment to Lord Vishnu with love and disinterest and attachment to all else that is not Vishnu. Prahalada (the child devotee of Vishnu) – and Uddhava define Bhakti in a similar way. Bhagavata Purana also lays emphasis on this kind of Bhakti. Hence the philosophy of Bhakti consist of one pointed attention, single-minded concentration, contemplation, attachment and devotion of God alone. Gita says: He who constantly prays on Me, thinking none else but Me, he who is Yogi and highly disciplined to Me, I am readily available¹³. Further it is said that the supreme person can be attained only exclusive devotion¹⁴. Further he said that by exclusive Bhakti only He can be known and beheld and entered so as He is real¹⁵. In the last chapter XVIII, Lord Krishna rightly pointed out as follows: “When a person knows me through Bhakti for what I am and who I am in reality, then he knows Me here by in reality and he enters Me immediately”¹⁶. Taking refuge in God is not to be called as Bhakti, there should be a Samarpana or offering everything to God for His sake. In Lord’s enjoyment one should feel happiness and bliss just like a sincere wife is pleased in the service of his beloved husband, without any independent benefit and a son who never expects anything when he do service to his mother.

Devotion to God is a kind of Prema. This kind of Prema should free from Kama. The first one is love whereas the latter is desire

and hence merges with lust. All actions should be performed with a sole intention of pleasing God. The distinguishing feature of devotion is love and love for highest Paramapurusa. The Maharshis advocate one love and nothing more than that. Every single object demands one pointed affection towards it. It is really hard to reciprocate love on any object unless there is sincere commitment and loyalty to it. When such an outpouring of all one's feeling of love is capable of being evoked by any object, it is called Ananyatva or non-otherness. When this happens without any reason, it is called Ahetuka or without reason¹⁷. Bhakti according to Ramanuja is the contemplation of God along with love. God the object of contemplation by the devotee is beautiful and therefore the act of contemplating God is very pleasing and satisfying. The word 'God' is synonymous with Sundaram or 'beautiful' or 'lovely'¹⁸. Bhakti can be expressed in different ways according to Bhagavatapurana. They are : Sravanam or loving to hear about God, Kirtanam or loving to praise God, Padasevanam or being delighted by adoring the feet of God, Arcanam or offering flowers and light to God, Vandanam or bowing to God, Dasyam or being servitude to God, Atmanivedanam or offering of one's self to God, Kantam or belovedness and lastly Tanmayam or having highest love for God.¹⁹

Ramanuja lays down the following conditions for development of pure unadulterated Bhakti towards God. They are : Ananyagatitvam or aversion of all interests other than God, Annanyacintanam or not thinking any object of world except God and Ananasaranata or not taking refuge in anybody except in God. In other words, these three concepts may be compared with that

of three thoughts of Tirumantra, i.e., Ananyarhaseshatva, ananyasaranatva and Ananyabhogyatva respectively.

Meaning of the word Bhakti

According to Lingapurana 'Dhayana with devotion is called Bhakti²⁰ : 'Bhaj' is the root word for Bhakti, which means 'Seva' i.e., service to God²¹ . The elite used to say the highest service to God, in the world of Bhakti²² . Ramanuja in his Gita Bhashya says that Bhakti is defined as an unceasing and loving meditation upon the Lord who is the treasury or immaculate and infinite beautiful qualities and constant remembrance of the nature of God, His Divya Mangala Vighraha and attributes flowing like an unbroken stream of oil poured from one vessel to another²³ .

Types of Bhakti

There are various types of Bhakti that can be illustrated by the different human relationship with God. The relationship of father and son is illustrated as in the case of Dasaratha and Rama, Vasudeva and Krishna, the Mother and Son relation as in the case of Kausalya and Rama and Devaki and Krishna are all the instances of Vatsalya Bhakti. The relation of husband and wife as in case of Rama and Sita, Krishna and Rukmini are an example for Madura Bhakti. The friendly relation can be seen in the case of Rama - Sugriva, Krishna - Arjuna are the Sakya Bhakti. The other one called Sahodara Bhakti or brotherhood affection between Rama-Lakshmana, Krishna-Balarama. The last one the servant-Master relationship seen in the case of Hanuman-Rama and Prahalada - Lord Vishnu which are the cases of Dasya Bhakti. The above mentioned relations existed between Jiva and the God when the

latter takes different Avataras in the form of human beings according to the necessity.

Prof. K.C.Varadachari, in his work “Aspects of Bhakti” gave succinctly the different kinds of Bhakti as follows : Bopaveda depicts Bhakti into two kinds namely, Vihita Bhakti or helpful devotion and Nisiddha Bhakti or prohibited devotion. Vihita Bhakti is further subdivided into Suddha or pure, Misra or mixed. The Misra Bhakti is classified into Jnanamisra, Karmamisra and Jnanakarmamisra. These are further sub-divided into Uttama, Madhyama and Adhama based on three Gunas of Prakriti namely Sattva, Rajo and Tamas. The Satvakarmamisra is again sub classified into three kinds namely Karmaksayārtha, Visnopriyārtha and Vidhisiddhiyārtha. Again rajaskarmamisra is divided into Visayārtha, Yosortha and Aisvaryārtha. The last one namely, Tamasickarmamisra is not considered as Bhakti in the true sense because it is endowed with the quality of Tamas²⁴ .

The Nisiddha Bhakti consists of four major elements, which are Kama, Dvesa, Bhaya and Asuya. If an aspirant approaches the Lord to solve his personal problems for the sake of enjoying his pleasures, then such an approach is not considered as Bhakti. Loving the God through sexual means or Kama is also not a way of Bhakti. Similarly if one develops hatred towards God out of jealousy or Asuya would certainly not a Bhakti because mere remembers on God which is an important condition for Bhaktimarga, then Bhaya or fear of God is not a means for seeking union with God because fear would creates a gap between the devotee and God. Although God seeks to dispel all fear, the presence of fear constantly makes union with God impossible.

Asuya or jealousy is also capable of generating constant remembrance arises rather out of self-defense. For this, Gita says: "The secret gospel of Gita should never be imported to a man who lacks penance, nor to him who is wanting in devotion, nor even to him who leads not a willing hear; and is no case to him who finds fault with Me"²⁵.

Bhakti is analysed into nine Rasas or tastes. They are: Santa, Hasya, Vatsalya, Adbhuta, Madhurya (rati), Soka, Viraha, Krodha and Vismaya. Vedanta Desika attributes great importance to Santarasa and towards attaining peace, which develops understanding. He also convinced that the aspirant's Bhakti has the power of evoking Karuna or compassion from the benign Lord, which is a gift of God.

Relationship of Jiva with God through Bhakti

The practice of Bhakti evokes different kinds of metaphysical relation between Jiva and God. Hence it is necessary to analyse the relationship between Jiva and God. The three schools of Vedanta namely, Advaita, Visistadvaita, Dvaita differ in their mode of explaining this relationships. The Advaita strongly affirms that there is a Absolute identification of Jiva with God, whereas the Visistadvaita believes that there is an Apruthaksiddhi or an inseparable relation between God and Jiva. On the contrary, the Dvaita establishes differences between God and Jiva. To elaborate the above three relationships, Advaita Bhakti is a Bhakti of experiencing the Jiva as becoming one with God. It is an Anirvacaniya and difficult to experience, but a philosophical and intellectual way of experience in God and Jiva. Ramanuja finds a perfect identity of essence, but the develop differences lies in their

forms. Since the Jiva is finite and imperfect it cannot be identical with Brahman in every respect. But the Jiva is not different from God in the sense that the God pervades and controls the soul as well as everything in the universe. Just like the existence of part is inseparably related to the whole, the Jiva is inseparably related to God.

Relationship between Bhakti and Saranagati

1. Bhakti and Saranagati are inter-related with each other. This relationship between them lies in the degree of importance attached to each of them. In some cases Bhakti dominates over Saranagati and in such situation Saranagati is only subsidiary or Anga to Bhakti and that is known as Sadhana Bhakti. In some other Saranagati dominates over Bhakti and the Bhakti becomes an Anga or auxillary to Saranagati and this type of Saranagati is known as Sadhya Bhakti. Ramanuja in his commentary on Gita, states that Saranagati is Anga for Bhakti whereas in Gadya Traya, he underlines that for attaining Moksha the direct mean is Saranagati which is an Angi and Bhakti is Anga for it. In Gita it is stated that : whatever offers Me with love a leaf, a flower, a fruit, are even water, I appear in person before that disinterested devotee of sinless mind, and delightfully partake of that article offered by him with love.²⁶ Some others hold the view that uttering God's name or earnest prayer itself is enough to seek union with God. Going to the temple, offering flowers, making garlands for God, doing service to idols like performing Abhisheka or going on pilgrimage to Holy places and taking bath in sacred rivers and tanks constitute as Sadhanas.

2. When one realizes his utter helplessness and is aware that his aspirations cannot be fulfilled, he surrenders himself before Lord and having full faith in his redeeming powers and also believes that He is the granter of all his aspirations, so he surrenders completely at the lotus feet of the Lord. This type of self-surrender is absolutely essential for successful performance of Bhaktiyoga. Here Saranagati is Anga to Bhakti and removes all hindrances to do Bhakti Yoga. It is impracticable to follow any other Sadhana unless one arrests all the outgoing senses and thoughts. This only will effect self realization. Gita declares that : Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me and made obeisance to Me; thus linking yourself with Me and entirely depending on Me, you shall come to me.²⁷ After controlling the body, mind and senses one can concentrate on the God. This is also rightly pointed out in Gita as follows : And occupying that seat, concentrating the mind and controlling the functions of the mind and senses, he should practice yoga for self-purification.²⁸ Thus constant practice of meditation assists the aspirant to practice Bhakti and Saranagati like thread which is common for a garland which has different kinds of flowers.

3. Generally, Saranagati is used for two purposes. One is to make Bhaktiyoga perfect. In other words, the aspirant who finds difficult to practice Bhaktiyoga may take refuge at the Lord's feet and request the Lord to help him tide over the short comings or difficulties of Bhaktiyoga. Here Saranagati function as a auxillary Sadhana. At other times Saranagati acts as an independent means to attain Moksha for those who are not having capacity to practice Bhakti. While explaining the greatness of Acharya Abhimana, Pillai Lokacharya refers that for those who are unable to do Bhakti, they can do Saranagati.²⁹

4. Vedanta Desika, while quoting Bhagavat Gita where Bhakti helps one to attain four Purusharthas i.e., Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, emphasised that even in Saranagati also the aspirant can attain the above said fourfold Purusharthas or Chaturvidapurusharthas.³⁰

5. Generally speaking obeisance can be classified into three types namely, verbal or Vachika, mental or Manasa, and bodily or Kayika. So also in the case of Saranagati. It is believed that only when all the three actions namely verbal, mental and bodily obeisances are performed perfectly that obeisance would be complete to attain Moksha. This can be explained as stated in Mumukshupadi by Pillai Lokacharya as well as by Manavala Mamuni. According to Pillai Lokacharya, that though there is no harm in getting fruit of Saranagati by doing verbal or bodily obeisances, there is a saying in Vishnu Dharma and Mahabharata Santi Parva that mental obeisances only gives effect to attain Moksha.³¹ Manavala Mamuni, by quoting Pillai Lokacharya's Paranthappadi states that by knowledge one can attain Moksha. Here, knowledge means the act of mind. The act of mind derives the knowledge on the following :

1. A knowledge which underlines that one is servitude to God and not others;
2. A knowledge which is entirely different from practicing Karma, Jnana and Bhakti as a mean;
3. A knowledge which is accepted that Lord is the saviour of all;
4. A knowledge, which knows that Saranagati, is to be practiced only once.

5. A knowledge that there is no formality to do Saranagati;
6. A knowledge that knows that it will not expect any thinking in the end of life;
7. A knowledge that it is for happiness and so on.³²
6. The next and most crucial relation between Saranagati and other Sadhanas are that, the Vedas prescribe Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Saranagati are the Sadhanas for attaining Moksha. The Visistadvaita school of philosophy believes that Karma and Jnana to be instrumental to Bhaktiyoga whereas Saranagati acts as direct mean. In Mahabharata Santiparva, it is said that, Saranagati can be practised as a mean as it should be made to the Supreme in order to attain the expected favourable results because Saranagati made to lower Gods would yield low results.³³

Differences between Bhakti and Saranagati

Though Bhakti and Saranagati are inter-linked, there are certain differences exist between them and they are elaborated and discussed by Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika.

Firstly, Bhaktiyoga requires most care, concentration and uninterrupted devotion. It requires certain disciplines which is well enumerated by Ramanuja in his Sri Bhasya as follows : Viveka or discrimination, Vimoka or controlling the passions, Abhyasa or Practice, Kriya or sacrificial work, Kalyana or purity, Anavasada or power or strength, Anurdarsa or suppression of excessive joy.³⁴ Another vital precondition is Atmadarsana. Bhaktiyoga is said to be complete only through successful practice of Karmayoga and Jnanayoga. Such a Bhaktiyoga can be inculcated only through the

efficacy of scriptures because they reveal to us the greatness of God.

On the other hand, Saranagati is very easy to develop and practice. All that is required is absolute and un-conditional Saranagati to be made at the lotus feet of the Lord. It does not lay down any pre-conditions adopted to practice like Karmayoga or Jnanayoga. However, the only requirement as mentioned in Rahasyatrayasara is, “to practice Saranagati one must have a knowledge about the relationship between Jiva and God”.³⁵ This relationship may be expressed in nine forms called Navavida Sambanda as enlightened by Pillai Lokacharya in his text.³⁶ The Navavida Sambanda (nine forms of relations) is as follow :

1. Pita – Putra Sambanda (Father and son relation)
2. Raksaka – Rakshyasambanda (Redeem and redeemed relation).
3. Sesha – Seshi Sambanda (Part and whole relation)
4. Bhatru – Bharya Sambanda (Husband and Wife relation)
5. Jnatru – Jneya Sambanda (Knower and Known relation)
6. Swa – Swami Sambanda
7. Adhara – Adheya Sambanda (Supporter and Supported relation)
8. Bhoktru – Bhogyasambanda
9. Sarira – Atma Sambanda (Body and sole relation)

Secondly, to practice Bhaktiyoga it is necessary to have a Sastric knowledge. The Sudras and Panchamas are disqualified

for the practice of Bhaktiyoga as they are not eligible to read Sastras.

On the contrary, Saranagati can be practised by one and all irrespective of caste, creed, colour, place or time. Much more, even the plants and animals can adopt Saranagati if they wish.³⁷ There is a evidence for this in the history. For instance in “Amuktamalyada” a literary classic written by Emperor Sri Krishnadevaraya, there is an episode depicting this fact. Vedanta Desika used to meditate on Lord Hayagriva at Tiruvahindrapuram. He was a regular performer of Ekadasivrata and consume a dish made out of the leaves of a particular Agasthya tree on Dvadasi day to Lord Hayagriva. After several years out of gratitude one day Vedanta Desika performed Bharanyasa to that particular Agasthya tree after which the tree seemed to have got a new lease of life. From this incident, it becomes clear that plants and such like things are also eligible for Saranagati. But since it is not able to perform Saranagati on its own, the teacher or Guru can meditate on its behalf and perform Saranagati.

There is also an another incident that could be cited in this connection to show that animals also can perform Saranagati. The late Sri Abhinavaranganathaswami of Sri Parakalamutt at Mysore performed Bharanyasa to a dog. Everyday, the dog used to wait at the entrance of the Mutt during the Aradhana time performed to the Lord Hayagriva by the Acharya. Suddenly dog was ailing from some unknown troubles. The Acharya, out of sympathy performed Bharanyasa to that dog. Surprisingly after that the dog was not seen at the entrance of the Mutt again. This proof is enough to point out that animals are also eligible to perform Saranagati. (Published in The Hindu Newspaper).

This shows that Saranagati does not require any knowledge of higher studies of scriptures. The only aim of Saranagati is that it is easily accessible to all human beings for its practice and their attainment of Moksha.

Thirdly, the practice of Bhaktiyoga requires the Sastric recitation, which means that he must study and chant all that has been written in the Sastras, whereas Saranagati does not require any knowledge of Sastras and the very inability to practice Bhaktiyoga gives way to perform Saranagati.

Fourthly, in order to practice Bhaktiyoga the aspirant should overcome the effects of Prarabdhakarma or actions of the past life. This cannot be a work of one day, it may even take Kalpa, Manvantra or even Yuga. Thus obviously Bhakti demands extraordinary effort and stringent practice on the part of aspirant to nullify all the effects of his Prarabdhakarma during his several births. Also there is no assurance of the eradication of Prarabdhakarma in Bhaktiyoga. So the aspirant must have a great patience in wait for long years to attaining Moksha.

But in case of Saranagati the aspirant feels intense love for God and never for a moment thinks the impact of Prarabdhakarma. Puapanna is more eager to build up an unbreakable relation with God. Such relationship is viable through intense love which intum facilitates the aspirant to negate all the effects of Prarabdhakarma. Besides, Saranagati requires no continuous practice like Bhaktiyoga.

Fifthly, Bhakti is a life long practice, it means the aspirant should practice Bhakti until he breathes his last, even to continue in another birth also. It is a laborious process that cannot be performed in single day or single birth.

On the contrary, Saranagati is to be performed only once along with its five Angas. A second time performance of Saranagati is not feasible even if the aspirant commits mistakes unknowingly under such circumstances the only alternative is to pray for God's pardon, but not perform Saranagati. This may be compared that 'like a cleaver archer who shoots the target in one attempt taking only a fraction of a second.

Sixthly, Bhakti has the power to eradicate all sins that accumulated in the previous birth and reduced in several births till he attains Moksha. Whereas Saranagati has the capacity to destroy even that part of the Prarabdha Karma that has not yet began to result in addition to be Samchita Karmas. Besides this unique boon, it is the most efficacious and only Sadhana and this may be the reason that Ramanuja advocated Saranagati as a Sadhana to attain Moksha in his text Gadyas.

Seventhly, Bhaktiyoga stipulates seven essential pre-conditions such as Viveka, Vimoka, Abhyasa Kriya, Kalyana, Anavasada and Anurdarsa as laid down by Ramanuja. It can be developed only on the fulfilment of these Sadhana Satustyas or vital preconditions.

But in the case of Saranagati when one can not able to perform Bhaktiyoga with those preconditions, one must be with Akinchayantva and Ananyagatitva and then prostrate before Lord. In other words the very inability to adopt any other Sadhana itself is enough to practice Saranagati. Vedanta Desika compares this with the Brahmastra which by itself is capable of yielding the result, without the intervention of any other. Just like that missile it will not tolerate the adoption of any other means along with it.³⁸

Eighth point refers to the period of time taken for attaining Moksha by adopting Bhakti and Saranagati. In the case of Bhaktiyoga, it is nearly impossible to assess the time taken for getting Moksha, because in this the aspirant has to wait indefinitely for a long tenure to experience the effects of Prarabdhakarma. The period of time might be Kalpa, Manvantra or even a Yuga.

On the contrary, in the case of Saranagati, immediate effect will be there by granting Moksha to the aspirant according to the wishes of the one who performs it. There are incidents in the case of Cintayanti and Dadhipandava who got Moksha during Krishnavatara. The only deciding factor here is the aspirant's Supreme faith on the Divine communion. There are two types of aspirants – some ask for immediate Moksha when performs Saranagati and such Prapannas are called Arta Prapannas, while some others ask Moksha in their present end of the life and those Prapannas are called Drpta Prapannas. There is no difference in either type of Prapannas regarding enjoyment of Kainkarya in Paramapada, but only question of period.

Regarding the effectiveness of Saranagati, Bhaktiyoga can annihilate the ill consequences of the sins committed in this birth. But the Prarabdhakarma must inevitably be lived out. Bhaktiyoga cannot overcome this effect. On the other hand Saranagati is all powerful. It can negate the ill effects of Prarabdhakarma and there is no fear of rebirth to reap the consequences of Prarabdhakarma.

Then, Bhakti and Saranagati also differs in respect of Angas or accessories. Ramanuja held the view that Bhakti comprises eight Angas namely, Yama (restraint), Niyama (culture), Asana (posture), Pranayama (breath control), Pratyahara (withdrawal of senses),

Dharana (attention), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (concentration). Here Bhakti is known as Astangayoga. Vedanta Desika believed that Saranagati consists of six Angas such as Anukulyasamkalpa, Pratikulyavarjanam, Karpanyam, Mahavisvasam, Gopratvavaranam and Atmaniksepa. Of these, Atmaniksepa is Angi and the preceding five are Angas and for this reasons Saranagati is called Sadangayoga.³⁹

The next difference is between the followers of Bhakti or Bhaktas and the follower of Saranagati or Prapannas in respect of desires. The Bhaktas can be classified into four groups namely Arta, Artharthi, Jignasu and Jnani as classified by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita⁴⁰ An Arta is one who asks for wealth which he has lost once. Indra is an example for this, as his Indraloka was captured by Mahabali before completion of period and Indra begged the Lord to regain the same. An Artharthi is one who wants to become newly wealthy man. Druva, is an example for Artharthi, as he was denied to sit on the lap of his father and to accomplish this, he did penence for getting new Isvarya (wealth). Jignasu is one who wishes to get revelation of his soul, and its extistence, who is called Kaivalyan, whereas Jnani is one who desires to attain Moksha, like Prahlada who prays Sriman Narayana, inspite of impeachment of his arrogant father Iranya.

The Prapannas also are classified into two categories relating to their intensity to attain Moksha, namely, Artaprapannas and Drptaprapannas. The former ask for the immediate grant of Moksha because they cannot wait in this world any more time by sufferings. The latter asks Moksha at the end of the present life time.

Lastly, there is also a difference relating names and expressions of Bhakti and Saranagati. Bhakti can be expressed in nine forms such as Sravanam, Kirtanam, Vishnosmaranam, Padasevanam, Arcanam, Vandanam, Dasyam, Sakhyam and Atmanivedanam⁴¹ while Saranagati can be expressed in any of the following namely, Nyasa, Nyasavidya, Bharanyasa, Prapatti, Nikshepa raksha and Bharasamarpanam and so on.⁴²

Merits of Saranagati

According to Vedic tradition different aspirants offer different kinds of services or Kainkaryas to God. These differences arise due to the impact of the impressions of the past life or philosophically speaking, it is due to aspirant's Prarabdhakarma which effects or govern his present life. But once the temporary corporal body is cast away than the Prarabdhakarma looses its impact and there is no difference in enjoying the bliss or Ananda that is obtained. Sri Vaishnavism opines that the dependence of individual soul on Lord is absolute and uniform to all souls including Muktas. Only Saranagati and no other Sadhana has the unique capacity to negate the Prarabdhakarma or the effects of impressions of past life.

Thus Saranagati alone can surmount any obstacles including Prarabdha which the aspirant has to encounter while aiming Vaikunta, the abode of Lord Vishnu. This capacity of Saranagati establishes its supremacy and Bhaktiyoga without Saranagati is an impossibility.⁴³

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CHAPTER – VII

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF SARANAGATI

Saranagati plays a vital and indispensable role in shaping the course of life of an individual soul. Hence, in order to reap the benefits arising out of the practice of this supreme Sadhana, one must have a correct understanding which are free from all doubts and misconceptions. This Sadhana should be practiced with deep faith and commitment. Saranagati generally stems out of a thorough knowledge of Sadhiyopaya. Though one may possess a thorough knowledge of God and strong inclination to attain Moksha, but there is no possibility of attaining Moksha, unless one must have the complete and correct understanding about the Saranagati-Sadhana¹.

Pillai Lokacharya, Vedanta Desika and other Sri Vaisnava Acharyas have raised some of the fundamental doubts. These doubts were carefully analysed and clarified by the Acharyas particularly Vedanta Desika in his Rahasyatrayasara under the chapter, 'discussions and clarification of doubts and disputed points' which were extensively dealt with by Prof. N.S. Anantarangachar in his text 'the philosophy of Sadhana in Visistadvaita'. The doubts

that arised regarding the philosophy of Saranagati are broadly divided into three kinds as stated in the text.

They are :

- I. The doubts relating to the competence or Adikara of Saranagati
- II. The doubts relating to the nature or Svarupa of Saranagati
- III. The doubts about the accessories or Angas of Saranagati.
- I. The doubts relating to the competence or Adikara of Saranagati

There are four kinds of doubts under the competence or Adhikara of Saranagati.

1. There is no need for Sastras to enjoin Prapatti or Saranagati.
2. If there is no need, then all different upasanas are not consistent with one's essential nature.
3. Inspite this, the Jiva need not bound to surrender to Lord because he is already subservient to the Lord.
4. Accepting the above, Prapatti or Saranagati has no universal appeal because it is open to all irrespective of caste and creed.

Let us discuss briefly about the above mentioned doubts one after the other.

Firstly, defending the question of necessity of Sastras to enjoin Saranagati or Prapatti. While analysing this doubt, Vedanta Desika states that it is quite natural during distress and helpless conditions to seek the protection of somebody who is capable of safe

guarding them. Similarly an enlightened individual who is aware of his limitations and knows God's omnipotent nature will voluntarily surrender at the feet of God. Then, where is the necessity for Sastras to have or enjoin this upaya?

Replying to this, it is said that it is really far fetched. Vedanta Desika observed that no authority other than the Sastras can fetch the upaya to reach God. It is only the Sastras that enlighten us that God saves his devotees who seek His protection. Our ordinary experience teaches us that acts of service done against the Sastras are offences. It is common experience of everyone to know while seeking help from somebody to plan a scheme of approach to that one succeeds in that approach of seeking help and guidance. Likewise while seeking the Almighty's help, one must know the manner of seeking it and also realises who is worthy of getting it. There is no other authority except Sastras to enlighten us on the aspects that God saves His devotees when seek His protection through a Sadhana. Disrespecting the Sastras are a serious offence, because the tradition emphasises that man must abide by the Sastras in thought, word and deed. The need for practising Saranagati and the benefits of its practice are mentioned in Sastras only. Based on this trustworthy statements, the tenets are framed for the practice of Saranagati. If it is not adopted, then the Sastras lose their purpose.²

Secondly, "if there is no need for Sastras to enjoin Saranagati, then all upasanas are inconsistent with ones essential nature".

It is commonly believed that Bhakti and Saranagati are two different Sadhanas but it is left to the choice of the aspirant to choose either of them. Of these two Sadhanas it is commonly accepted that Saranagati is easier to practice because it is suitable

to man's essential nature, whereas Bhakti or upasana is a stable to one's nature and hence more difficult to practise.

In reply to this, the above assumption is incorrect. The implication is only to praise Saranagati and never to deprecate Bhakti. Bhakti cannot be opposed to the essential nature of man for the following reasons :

a) Bhakti or Upasana cannot destroy the self because it is eternal.

b) The self is capable of action or doership, because Arthakriyakaritva or purposeful action is the sign of existence. But it should not be assumed that the self is meant for mere existence which would imply that there is no need for liberation.

Further, it is thought that the inherent nature of the self is that, it is different from the body and so the performance of Varnasrama Dharma is against the nature of the self. This argument is fallacious and illogical. The self as such has no identify like a Brahmin or Kshatriya etc. On account of its association with the body it assumes the attributes of caste (depending on its Prarabdhakarma of previous birth) and so it becomes necessary to observe the Varnasrama Dharma. Therefore it becomes clear that the Upasana is not opposed to the nature of the self. The body and soul are the result of the Karma of the previous birth and if Salvation is to be sought then both body and soul together should perform Karmayoga because the soul cannot on its own work out for its salvation.³

Thirdly, it is accepted by all that Saranagati should be performed in a way that is ordered by the Sastras and there is no objection

to the idea that Saranagati is not opposed to the essential nature of the self. At the same time there is no need for Jiva to perform Saranagati at the Lord's feet. The Jiva who is Atyantaparatanttra or entirely dependent. On Brahman cannot protect himself and so is it necessary to adopt a Upaya like Saranagati for protection? Is not therefore Bhaktiyoga and the like in consistent with his essential nature of being Sesa and Atyantaparatanttra?

To clarify the above, Vedanta Desika states that this leads us to conclude Sarvamoksha Prasanga which is not correct. If an aspirant seeks liberation without the practice of any Sadhana, then he ought to satisfy the condition of being a Mukta from birth. This is also underlined in Mumukshupadi by Pillai Lokacharya when he explains the Charma Sloka the word 'Ekam' wherein he states acceptance of aspirant spontaneously only by His grace, which does not mean that all will get Moksha i.e. 'Sarvamukti Prasanga Pariharartham'.⁴ On the other than it cannot be said that God grants liberation to the soul when he desires or by virtue of His power of omnipotence because it would amount to accepting that God is partial.

Further a Jiva with 'Paratantrya' and 'Seshatva' point out that the Jiva should take recourse to a Sadhana that is acceptable by the Lord and within the feasible limits of practice by him and rely only on God and none else for attaining liberation. This being the state of Jiva, how can it said that Jiva can remain idle and attain Liberation. Idleness would only make the Jiva unfit for practicing Saranagati advocated by the Sastras in the words of 'Saranam Vraja' of Bhagavad Gita. So it is proved beyond doubt that Saranagati is essential for the Jiva, who is solely dependent on the

Lord to adopt any Sadhana that is suitable to him for attaining Moksha.⁵

Fourthly, if the above three objections are accepted even then Saranagati has no universal acceptance being open to all irrespective of caste and creed. Saranagati is accepted as an Upaya but it cannot be accepted as a universal Sadhana because the Vedas prescribe it as only a Dharma. Even the Nyasa Vidya consider (mentioned in Upanishad) is only a kind of Yoga. If it so, then how could it be suitable to all irrespective of caste or colour?

To clarify the above, the Vedas proclaimed two kinds of orders to be observed. They are universal Dharmas and particular Dharmas. / Saranagati belongs to the universal Dharma just like scriptures delivering truth. Satyavachana is a Vedic Dharma and is a universal one. So also the doctrine of Saranagati is a Samanya Dharma common to all. The Upasanas, according to the Sastras are meant to be practiced only by people of the higher caste like Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaisya. The universality of Saranagati is confirmed by the following reasons: ⁶

a) There are no conditions stated as requirements for the practice of Saranagati as in the case of Upasanas.

b) No restriction of caste and such other things for performing Saranagati.

The Svetasvatara text proclaims that God is the saviour of all Jivas. The holy scriptures like Ramayana, Satvata Samhita, Sanatkumara Samhita also state the same idea. Faith in God's supremacy and redeeming nature and possession of qualities like Akinachanya and Mahavisvasa are sufficient for adopting

Saranagati, whereas the Upasanas, according to injunctions should be inculcated only in people belonging to higher caste.

Hence the validity of competence or Adhikara of Saranagati is well narrated.

II. The doubts relating to the nature or Svarupa of Saranagati

The nature or Svarupa of Saranagati and its importance were well clarified by Pillai Lokacharya. These were recorded in Chapter III (p.74).

The doubts relating to nature or Svarupa of Saranagati are as follows :

1. Prapatti or Saranagati is a sincere prayer but not a surrender of the self.
2. Prapatti or Saranagati is merely a knowledge of the relationship between the individual Jiva and Paramathman.
3. Shirking one's duty in order to save oneself is Prapatti or Saranagati.
4. Does not the injunction 'Give up all Dharmas' relevant to Prapatti also?
5. Does the performance of 'Varnasrama Dharma' affect the sincere devotee?

Let us discuss the above doubts in a sequential order :

Firstly, the Saranagati is only a sincere prayer with faith and not a self-surrender.

In replying to this, Vedanta Desika states as follows :

The statements like “Upaya iti visvasaha dvayarthaha Saranagatihi”, “Prapatti visvasaha” and “Visvasapurvakam prarthanam” are all indicative of faith besides throwing light on the general nature of Saranagati. Ramanuja himself narrated in his Saranagati Gadya while making the prayer, ‘*Dasyatheeti Visvasapurvakam Bhagavantam nityakinkaratham prarthayae*’ and ends with the word ‘Namostutae’. This is evident enough to know that Ramanuja has made self surrender. Apart from this, Ramanuja has clearly stated that self surrender preceded with prayer. Therefore it becomes clear that self-surrender and prayer are two different things. That is prayer is only a part or Anga. Whereas surrender of the self is the main aspect or Angi. But the prayer is highly significant, because it denotes God has eagerly awaiting the aspirant’s desire for protection. Ramanuja himself concludes this prayer with ‘Namaha’ which denotes self-surrender. This self surrender is denoted by the syllables ‘Niksepa’ and ‘Bharanyasa’ and shown in the statement ‘Svaatmanam mayi niksepeth’. These words enlightens that Saranagati is not merely a prayer with faith but a prayer with self surrender or Niksepa. The statement “*Prapattim tam prayunj ita svangee pancha bhiravrtam*” points out that the first five are accessories or Angas and the one is Angi or main aspect. The same point is made in ‘Lakshmi Tantra’ and ‘Ahirbudhanya Samhita’ about Prapatti. Even in our day today life we refer to Anga in terms of Angi. Like ^{Anga} instance we use the word ‘Alamba’ which means killing and connote the word for self-surrender. The word ‘Yaga’ refers to some sacrifice or oblation, made to a particular deity. Atmayaga refers to the offering of Atma or soul to the Lord Narayana.

Sri Rama Misra and other great sages of the past looked at Saranagati as refraining from one's own duty. If the responsibility of safeguarding the soul were not bestowed on God, the very desire for protection itself will prevent one from refraining from one's duty. So, the three feelings namely helplessness, prayer and surrender of responsibilities are all inter-related. Thus, it can be said that Saranagati is not merely a prayer but it is self-surrender to the Lord asking for protection.⁷

Secondly, it is generally believed that Saranagati is reflecting the relationship between the Jivatman and Paramatman like Sesha Seshi Sambandha. Is it not the case that Holy Scriptures instruct one to be always subservient to the Lord? This can be understood if the Sastras are understood rightly.

A concrete reply given in the text runs as follows :

This line of argument is not sound because it is like saying that Moksha is possible with a knowledge of the Sastras. The knowledge of Sastras is a pre-requisite for all religions. But it should not be mistaken for anything more than that. The knowledge of being subservient to God is necessary for performing Upasana or Saranagati. After attaining Moksha the soul enters Sesavriti or eternal service to God. It is necessary and adequate to observe any spiritual discipline because that itself in course of time provide the knowledge which may attain perfection gradually. So mere knowledge of Sastras is insufficient. A knowledge of the Sastra combined with the faith of entrusting one's own protection to the Lord is necessary. The performance of Saranagati requires a fundamental qualification namely the knowledge of Seshatva. This enables the person to get rid of egoistic feelings even after

Saranagati is made. The Sastras advise the Jivatman who is guilty of sin of Atmabhara to surrender the responsibility of his protection to the Lord as a means to wash away his sin.⁸

Atmasamarpana, which is self-offering, is possible only with accessories like Anukulyasamkalpa, Mahavisvasa etc. Atmasamarpana should be performed along with Sesatvanusadhana. Hence Seshatva or mere knowledge of servitude can never become Saranagati. Just as Moksha cannot be attained by adopting a Upaya, so too Saranagati cannot be performed just by the awareness of one's subservience to God but should be coupled with entrusting the task of repeatedly asking God for liberation from Samsara, through Acharya.

Pillai Lokacharya also enlightens that 'pranava' denotes the relationship of Jivatma and Paramatma. In other words Jeevapara Sambandha i.e., Sesha Seshibhava, in a Sutra in Mumukshupadi by quoting, Tirumangai Alvar's hymn (8.9.3).⁹

Thirdly, It is also believed that striking away from one's own activity in mundane life to save oneself is Saranagati. Hence there is a contention that Saranagati is shirking off one's duty in order to save oneself. 'Sarvadharmaan parityajya' means the abandonment of all duties or Upayas or Sadhanas with. The misunderstanding, is it important to take away all Dharmas is a justification of Saranagati which is a 'Svaraksnartha Sva vyaparanivirthihi'.

Eliciting the doubt with a concrete statement, Vedanta Desha says that the above kind of reasoning is illogical because the act of abstaining all actions itself is a action and is made in order to save oneself and also it goes against the conditions laid down for the performance of Prapatti.

Prapatti, moreover is only a Upaya to Siddhopaya. In that case it is against the essential nature of the Supreme being who is the only Upaya and is not depended on any other's help. Thus the arrangement is also contrary to the teachings of Sruti and Smriti. This view is wrong because there is no proper evidence for it. It is incorrect to say that a single Upaya is hampered whenever an accessory is required. Neither can it be said that Nirapekshatva is affected whenever an accessory is required. Assuming that the above argument is valid and correct despite these fallacies, then the same logic is applicable to the Upasanas and it results in the renunciation of Sadhana bhava in the Upasanas that have gained admittance to it. One cannot say that unnecessary burdens are loaded on Arjuna by Lord Krishna to remove his pride. The Sastras and the texts unanimously declare that the worship of the Lord is the greatest Dharma. By adopting the processes of Kamayoga, Jnanayoga and Bhaktiyoga, one can gain the vision of the Lord. Praying to Vasudeva is the highest Dharma. How can these well-known Dharmas be objected when all these are necessary for attaining Moksha. If so, does it not imply that the Sastras have no purpose? Does it not become similar to the standpoint of heretics then? So "Sarvadharmā Svarupathyaga" may not be the core of Saranagati".¹⁰ It means to do all Dharmas without any intention or expecting benefit.

Fourthly, is the statement 'Give up all Dharmas' apply to Saranagati. "Sarvadharmā Parityajya" is very important because of its comprehensive nature. The word 'all' has a very wide of reference and includes every single Dharma. "Saranavarānam" or seeking the protection of the Lord is also a Dharma and even that has to be give up for fear of contracting the meaning of "all". Hence

it is wrong to consider that Prapatti includes Sadhanatva of Bhagavad Gita.

Replying to this, Vedanta Desika states that the fact is Saranagati should not be considered to be a direct or independent Sadhana for attaining Moksha. This is also true of all Upasanas. Therefore is not Saranagati and other Sadhanas the only means for gaining Lord's grace who is Himself the means and end of attaining Moksha.

It is far fetched to argue that we must abandon the thought that Saranagati is only a means for gaining the grace of the Lord. This is as good as giving up the thought of saying that the Sadhanatva even in Siddhopaya for fear of compressing the meaning of the word "all Dharmas". The Sruti proclaims that Lord is the eternal Dharmas, So it can be said that all Dharmas except the one mentioned in Charamasloka i.e., Siddhopaya, are to be abandoned except Prapatti or Saranagati, which is prescribed in the same context as Saranam Vraja.

It is stated that the 'unique upaya' namely the Lord has no beginning like any other Upaya or Upasana. He is in no need of any higher promotion to perfection since He Himself is an abode of all perfection. He can realize His will without having to depend on any Upasana. If so then of what use if Saranagati to Him?

This can be answered thus : Bhakti and Saranagati help us in preventing the reaping of God's dislike which occurs when we violate the Divine commands. This, in fact, is the purpose of Prapatti when we pray for Moksha. If Saranagati is adopted for seeking other objectives they help by effecting a favourable disposition in God towards us. The Lord who is actually the means for attaining

Mukti is pleased with our Vvajas and grants us the Supreme benefit of His eternal service after making us fit for it.

Moreover, there is no discord between the two Pramanas that is Bhakti which induces God to bestow all benefits and the other Saranagati which declares that all benefits can be reaped by the adoption of Sadhyopaya. Therefore when viewed from the right perspective both Pramanas – Siddhopaya and Sadhyopaya are complementary to each other and never discordant”¹¹

Fifthly, the non-performance of ‘Varnasrama Dharmas’ in consistent with the sincere devotee? It is argued that the performance of one’ studies i.e. “Varnasrama Dharmas” stands in the way of the aspirant’s realization of his relationship with God. This kind of a devotee is called Suddha-Yajin. It is generally contended that he need not practice the duties of his Varma and Asrama as it leads to the association of other deities like Agni, Indra and Varuna etc.

Answering to this, it is stated that, if one understands the teachings of the sages of the past, such a doubt would never arise. Also if one understands the nature of the Supreme Reality one can beyond any doubt be convinced that the God who is omniscient and omnipotent. God is worshipped in all our actions because He is the controller of everything - Antaryamin of all duties.

So, even if the other deities are worshipped with this knowledge that God is the Sarvatman ultimate authority being worshipped then there will be no adverse effect. On the other hand, worshipping other deities as if they were independent desiring certain benefits, then it would be opposed to his devotion.

The Upanasas are adopted only to produce faith in the efficacy of the Sastras. The aspirant must choose God alone as his goal. The reason why the Upanasas are discarded is that they are not the means. Saranagati alone is the means.

This argument is unacceptable because Upanasas are to be adopted for attaining Moksha. Upanasas are suggested for adoption not because they create a desire for adopting an easier means. Upanasas do not produce benefits in this life and therefore cannot create confidence in the aspirants' mind regarding the power of Saranagati. Moreover if success through an easier means causes faith more in a difficult means. Further more, the knowledge of attaining the life's goal is got from the Sastras and it cannot be said that Upanasas or Bhakti is opposed to this. If one entertains any doubt the authority of the Sastras, then the competency of Saranagati also becomes susceptible on the same grounds. Therefore, Bhakti and Saranagati are the correct Upanasas for attaining Mukti because the Sastras advocate them. The spiritual aspirant may choose any of the two according to his ability and competency. In this way the nature or Svarupa of Saranagati is portrayed.

III. Fundamental doubts relating to the accessories or Angas of Saranagati are hereunder discussed.

It is said that there are six fundamental doubts on this point dealt with by Vedanta Desika. They are being analysed thoroughly by Prof. N.S. Anantarangachar as follows :

The first doubt levelled against Saranagati relates to the relevance of Anukulyasamkalpa and Pratikulyavrijanam. Lord is

always compassionate and has seek refuge in Him. It does not matter whether he is a sinner or enemy. If so, then of what are uses of Angas of Saranagati like Anukulyasamkalpa and others?

It is incorrect to argue that these Angas are unnecessary while performing Saranagati. There is a clear difference between Angi and Angas of Saranagati and there are many evidences to show the difference between the main Angi and its accessories or Angas. It is advisable to practice these Angas even in our daily life. Perhaps these Angas may become unnecessary after the performance of Saranagati because God has already been sought to offer protection to the Prapanna. But it is wrong to state that these Angas are unnecessary at the time of performing Saranagati, because the performance of Saranagati will be incomplete without these Angas. Just as the great Brahmastra requires certain Angas of its own, Saranagati too requires them. But unlike Bhaktiyoga which needs Angas like Karmayoga, Jnanayoga, Saranagati does not need any Dharma or rite, other than its own Angas.

Secondly, some aspirants who believe in Sastras argue that there is nothing like Mahavisvas leaving aside “Sastrartha Visvasa” to be followed as an accessory while performing Saranagati. In other words, Mahavisvasa is not an Anga of Saranagati at all.

To make it clear, the above belief is objected on two grounds. Firstly on the authority of the scriptures, Mahavisvasa is an essential Anga of Saranagati. Secondly there is difference in the intensity of faith as is reflected through the difference in the intensity of faith as is reflected through the different outcome of the same experience. For example, there are many people who believe in the

Moolamantra but their belief may vary in degree and depending on their degree of faith they reap the benefits. Therefore it is absolutely essential to have perfect faith while performing Saranagati.

Again it may be questioned that while performing Saranagati, if one does not have hundred per cent faith, will it be rejected by God? The answer is definitely no. In other words, if Saranagati is to be performed with faith, but not in full measure, it will yield the benefits in proportion to faith. There is ample evidence vouchsafing the infinite mercy of the Lord. God never fails to redeem one who has sought His protection. Yamunacharya points out that if only folds his hands in supplication beseeching God's help, he will be surely pardoned. God accepts one's faith and perfects it if he turns to the God. Thus it becomes clear that Mahavisvasa definitely becomes an Anga of Saranagati according to the Sastras, though it may vary in its degree depending upon the aspirants.¹²

The third doubt leveled against Saranagati is that Bhakti and Saranagati have the power of granting either worldly prosperity or Moksha depending upon the aspirations of the devotee. The doubt is how can such opposing benefits be reaped out of Bhakti or Prapatti. Don't we reap only what is sown?

He clarified the doubt in the following manner : when a man of royal birth offers a thing for sale he gets a high price for it. Similarly if we offer our prayers to God with complete faith without asking for any reward, God will voluntarily grant us all, including even the unvoiced desires. Likewise, Bhakti and Saranagati are capable of granting all kinds of desires whether it is worldly or spiritual in nature. If Bhakti or Saranagati is adopted for accomplishing worldly desires they become Pravrtti Dharmas' and

when adopted for attaining eternal world they function as “Nivrtti Dharmas”. Thus it is a matter of the aspirations of the devotee on which the results are depended.

Fourthly, is it proper to consider Bhakti and Saranagati which are different in nature to be capable of yielding the same result? Bhakti is to be performed continuously until death whereas Saranagati should be performed only once in a life time. Bhakti depends on Karmayoga and Jnanayoga whereas Saranagati needs nothing other than its own accessories like Anukulya Sankalpa etc. If so how can Saranagati yields the same fruit as Bhakti?

The answer to the doubt is in-affirmative because both these Upayas depend upon the mental attitude of the aspirant. The aspirant who has chosen Bhaktiyoga as his Upaya chooses Brahman as his goal and puts in his best efforts to evolve stronger and stronger in his Bhaktiyoga. He needs to have a thorough knowledge of reality and the mental ability to take up Bhaktiyoga as his Upaya.

The qualifications for Saranagati are different. Such of those who are utterly helpless and cannot practice Bhaktiyoga for lack of knowledge of the Sastras and those who cannot endure any delay in attaining God become eligible for adopting Saranagati and they reap the same benefits as those who practice Bhaktiyoga. To the performers of Saranagati, God Himself is the endeavour and the goal. But the fruit namely, Moksha may be delayed depending upon his urgency of desire or Tvara to attain Divine communion. Thus the Bhakti and Saranagati vary in nature but yield the same result. The difference lies only in as much as they cater to the different mental abilities of the aspirants. So actually there is no difference in these two ways as both lead to the same destination.¹³

Another last but doubt raised against Saranagati is regarding its effectiveness. The Saranagati is capable of giving all benefits, when it fails to yield some of the worldly benefits occasionally. The doubt here is why Saranagati fails occasionally?

The answer to the above question it said that Saranagati when performed in a proper way with all its Angas will never fail to yield the desires even if they worldly desires. If at all it fails to yield the benefit, it should perhaps be due to deficiency in its performance. The defect may be in Karma or Karta o Sadhana or Parikara. It might be due to the lack of Mahavisvasa or having super faith on Saranagati if aspirant is capable of adopting some other Upayas he is a Sakinchana, then he may not have the eligibility to adopt Saranagati as a upaya. This is known as 'Kartvaigunyam', if aspirant has no faith in the teachings of Acharyas there will be defect in Parikara and that Saranagati will not be successful. Therefore when Saranagati is performed without any defect even the objects of desire, worldly and visible become fulfilled.¹⁴

Lastly, Saranagati is only an Anga of Bhaktiyoga however powerful it may be. The great sages of the past have prescribed Bhaktiyoga only as a means for attaining Moksha. Viewed from this aspect Saranagati only an Anga of Bhaktiyoga. Therefore Bhaktiyoga alone can grant Moksha and Saranagati can be only an Anga and can never become an independent Sadhana as supported by Gita also.

This can be clarified as follows : Based on the authority of the scriptures, Saranagati is an independent Sadhana for receiving Moksha. The holy scriptures observe that those aspirants who are incapable of meditation can resort to absolute surrender at the

feet of the Lord. It is stated in the scriptures that transformation may take place even in an atheist or worst sinner if he makes self-surrender. The Ahirbudhnya Samhita states that Saranagati is a direct Sadhana and can fetch any results that are not possible through Karmayoga, Jnanayoga and Bhaktiyoga.¹⁵ Ramanuja in his Vaikunta Gadyam states that the adoption of Saranagati as a Sadhana, enhances one's capacity for meditation on the Lord. When a Prapanna adopts meditation it is purely for the sake of enjoying meditation and not as a means for any goal, while the meditation adopted by the Upasaka is for attaining Moksha. This is expressed in the following comparison, when Prapanna meditates, it is for his svayamprayojana like a healthy man drinking milk for the pleasure of drinking whereas, Upasakas meditation is for getting the ultimate goal namely, Moksha, like a diseased man drinking milk for the purpose of curing his health.¹⁶

In this context one may ask the question can a Prapanna meditate on the Lord with all its Angas even though he has no capacity? The answer to this question is that everyone can meditate on the Lord in a way suitable to his capacity and this has no impact on the Upasanas. Ramanuja himself has instructed this means of Saranagati in his three Gadyas namely, Saranagati Gadyam, Sriranga Gadyam and in Vaikunta Gadyam. He has informed, this type meditation on God by which the aspirant may fortify his objective of attaining Supreme Lord. Thus it can be seen that Saranagati can be adopted as a direct means for attaining Moksha just as an indirect means for perfecting Bhaktiyoga. Hence Bhakti and Saranagati are two Sadhanas that can be practiced by all and there is no conflict between them. A Prapanna may engage in meditation but it is not as a means, but as the fruit of his Saranagati.

Therefore we can draw the conclusion that Saranagati is not an Anga of Bhaktiyoga but is a direct and immediate means to Moksha, Practiced by all, irrespective of caste, creed, colour and gender, as such it will definitely yield the fruits provided it is to be performed with whole-hearted faith and surrender.¹⁷

Reference

1. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, p.160.
2. The Philosophy of Sadhana in Visistadvaita, p.225.
3. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, p.166, quoted in, the philosophy of Sadhana is Visistadvaita, 226.
4. Mumukshupadi, Sutra, 228.
5. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, 167, quoted in, the philosophy of Sadhana in Visistadvaita, p.227.
6. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, 161, Ibid, p.227.
7. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, p.162, Ibid, p.229.
8. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, 162, Ibid, p.230.
9. Mumukshupadi, Sutra, 72.
10. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, p.163.
11. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, p.164, quoted in, the philosophy of Sadhana in Visistadvaita, p.232.
12. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, p.170, Ibid, p.235.
13. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, p.170, Ibid, p.236.
14. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, p.171, Ibid, p.257.
15. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, p.171, Ibid, p.237.
16. Rahasyatrayasara, 24, p.171, Ibid, p.238.
17. The philosophy of Sadhana in Visistadvaita, p.238.



CONCLUSION

From the deep analysis of the philosophy of Sri Vaishnavism, I have thoroughly discussed the theme from the works of Sri Vaishnava Acharyas in seven chapters.

In the I Chapter 'The nature and destiny of the soul'. I have explained the nature of soul as given in the six systems of Indian philosophy. When we analysed the nature of soul, Visistadvaita recalls the three Tatvas i.e. Cit, Acit and Iswara. Cit and Acit are inseparable body of Iswara before creating the Universe. This is being explained elaborately as spoken by Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika and others. The destiny of the soul, after releasing from this life, will attain Moksha when one performs Sadhana like Karmayoga, Jnanayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Saranagati. The nature of attainment may be classified into four according to Sri Vaishnavism. They are : i. Salokya (co-existence), ii. Sarupya (similarity), iii. Samipya (Intimacy), iv. Sayujya (equality). This is well explained according to ancient texts. Having known the nature of soul in the Chapter I, it is necessary to know the doctrine of Saranagati as described in Vedas, Samhitas, Upanishads, Puranas like Bhagavata Purana, epics like Ramayana and Bhaktas like Prahalada, Ambarisha, Gajendra and so on are dealt within

the Chapter II. Apart from this the pre-conditions of Saranagati is also traced from Sri Ramayana. With a view to eliciting the easiness of the practice of Saranagati, Krishna's Bhagavat Gita where He enumerated the greatness of Bhakti, is also explained. When we look into the Dravida Veda, Alvars, with so much of Bhakti did Saranagati. They enlightened the importance of Saranagati and they showed a way for everyone who wants to reach God.

Since the gist of Vedas and Vedanta were recorded in Dravida Veda by Alvars in Tamil language, the later Acharyas beginning from Sriman Nathamunigal down to Manavala Mamuni unearthed the inner love, particularly Saranagati- vidya through their writings that were shown in the Chapter III. Yamunacharya explained vividly in his Stotra Ratna and Chatusloki about the Lord as a mean to attain Moksha. Ramanuja, though followed the open thoughts of Lord Krishna when he preached Arjuna the Bhaktiyoga, in Gadyatrayas, he emphasised the Saranagati as a mean to attain Moksha and Bhakti as Angi for Saranagati.

Following Ramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika also explained the greatness of Saranagati in their texts. Manavala Mamuni in his text Upadesaratnamala explained the importance of Acharya Abhimana which attains one to Moksha. In this chapter the six Angas or accessories of Saranagati i.e. Anukulyasamkalpa, Pratikulyavarjanam, Karpanyam, Mahavisvamsam, Gopratvavarnam and Atmanikshepa are elaborately discussed with by referring Sri Vachana Bhushana of Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika's Rahasyatrayasara. Apart from this Vedanta Desika explains the necessity of Bharnyasa – Svarupa Samarpana and Phalasamarpana and Atmasamarpana. A special requisite to be adopted for the

practice of Saranagati is being explained. The important types of Saranagati are : Uktinista, Acharyanista, Svanista, Arathaprapatti, Driptaprapatti and so on.

In the Chapter IV, the three supreme Rahasyas i.e., Tirumantra, Dvaya mantra and Charamasloka, which are the fundamental doctrines of Srivaishnavism, is elaborately discussed by quoting Pillai Lokacharya's Mumukshupadi, Tatvatrayam and Sri Vacana Bhushana and its commentaries of Manavala Mamuni and other Rahasyas of Pillai Lokacharya. While dealing with the Tirumantra the importance of all the syllabi are minutely enlightened as stated by Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika in their Rahasyas.

Greatness of Moolmantra, the supremacy of Pranava, the meaning of Namaha and Narayanaya are fully discussed. Likewise Dvaya mantra, its greatness, significance of each word are well-discussed. This Mantra is the Saranagati Mantra for an aspirant while prostrating before his Acharya, he has to say this Mantra. Each word of Charama sloka is also discussed. The essential teachings of Ramanuja and Vedanta Desika are well noted in these pages.

Chapter V deals with the conduct and duties of Prapanna. Specific and general characteristics of Prapanna are explained as codified in Sastras. Conversation between Acharyas on the practicality of doing Saranagati is also enumerated as given in Varthamala. The routine five duties of Prapanna as enlightened in 'Nityam' also finds a place.

Chapter VI eulogises the nature of Bhakti and Saranagati covering the Upanishadic thought on Bhakti, the relation of Jiva and Iswara; the relation of Bhakti and Saranagati and lastly the

important differences between Bhakti and Saranagati and at the end, the merits of Saranagati are lucidly explained.

Lastly, in Chapter VII, arguments in support of Saranagati is well explained as quoted by Vedanta Desika. There are three kinds of doubts.

1. The doubts relating to the competence or Adhikara of Saranagati.
2. The doubts relating to the nature or Svarupa of Saranagati.
3. The doubts about the accessories or Angas of Saranagati.

These are elaborated with the reasons and classifications given by Vedanta Desika.

In this way, the book analyses the greatness of Saranagati in Sri Vaishnavism. This will be useful for those who have the thrust in knowing the doctrines in Sri Vaishnavism.

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